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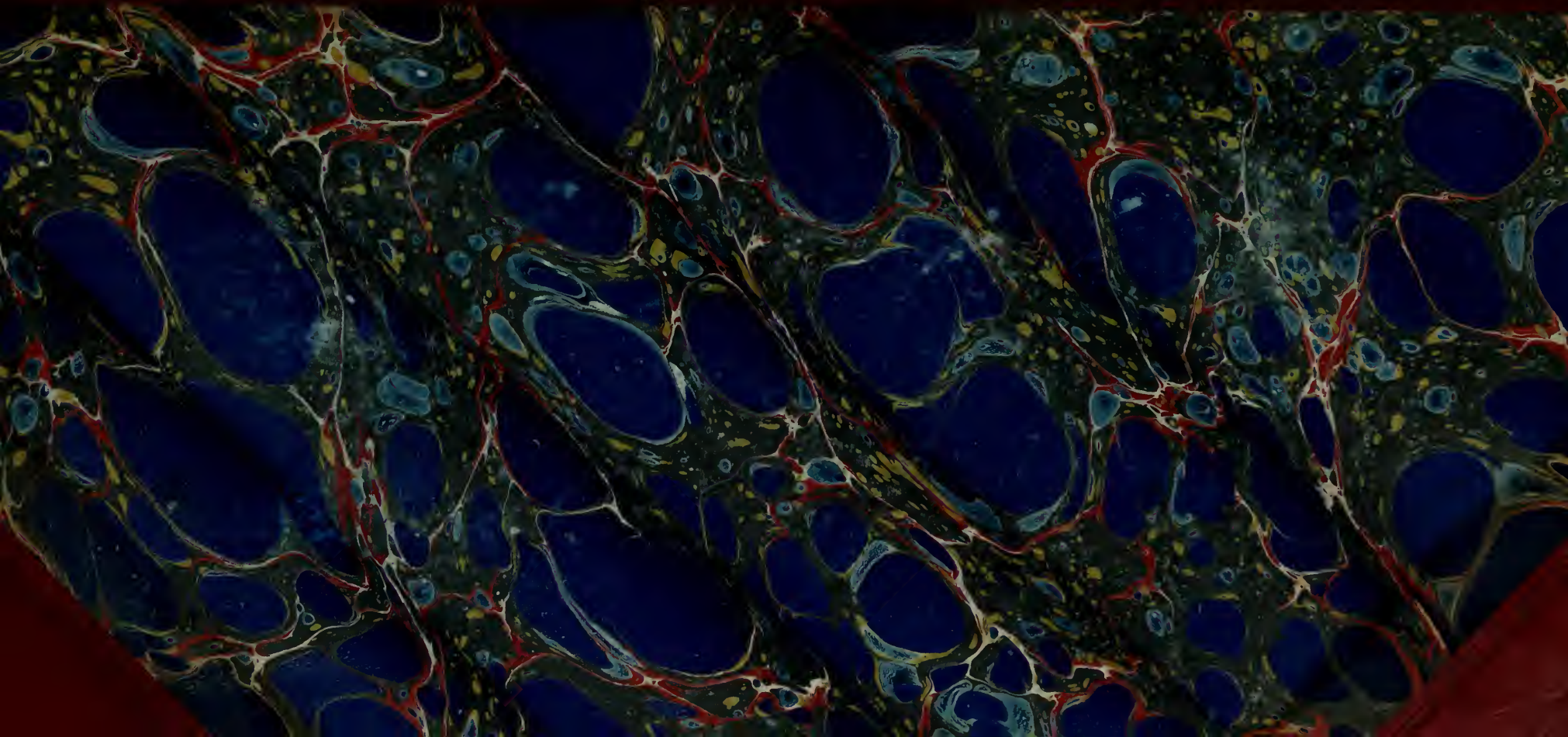

J. SWAIN.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XXVI.

July to December, 1878.

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON,
8, NEW BURLINGTON STREET, LONDON, W.
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

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MAR 25 1910
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LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. OGDEN AND CO.,
172, ST. JOHN STREET, E.C.

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CONTENTS.

POMEROY ABBEY. By the Author of "EAST LYNNE." With Illustrations by M. Ellen Edwards.

		PAGE
Chap. XIX.	Whispered News	1
XX.	In the Chapel	10
XXI.	A Frail Blossom	19
XXII.	Later On	81
XXIII.	Mystery	88
XXIV.	Bridget's Tale	102
XXV.	Beans and Bacon	161
XXVI.	With Mr. Hildyard	168
XXVII.	On tha Seat by the Sea	177
XXVIII.	Trouble and Terror	241
XXIX.	In the Keep	252
XXX.	Laid to Rest	264
XXXI.	After Many Yèars	321
XXXII.	Naomi's Revelation	330
XXXIII.	Annaline	340
XXXIV.	Amidst the Roses	401
XXXV.	Rupert and Mary	407
XXXVI.	With Mrs. Wylde	412
XXXVII.	Rivalry	420
XXXVIII.	Conclusion	426

Adventure in the Marais, An	234
After the Season	160
An Allegory	515
Autumn Song	292
Balzac and His Publishers	270
Beautiful, The	385
Brave Wife, A	150
Chance	320
Charcoal Burner, The	278
Day's Outing in Japan, A	378
Ensign Ranson	369
Fate of the Fosbrookes, The	465
Few Famous Duels, A	188
Haymaking	80
Hidden	455
How Anna Carolla became Famous	462
How Farmer Rees found his Memory. By ANNE BEALE	140
Ilfracombe Boatman, The	116
In Search of a Wife	484
Jewelled Casket, The	71

PAGE
John Keats. By ALICE KING 344
Lighthouses. 301
Lines : "Give me my Youth Again" 269
Lottery in Italy, The 229
Marie de Valois 58
Martin and Clare 437
Mary Lamb. By ALICE KING 110
Maud Vavasour 308
One Fatal Night. By CHARLES W. WOOD 494
Orkney and Shetland Islands. Illustrated. By CHARLES W. WOOD 43
Perpétue. By JULIA KAVANAGH 431
Royal Mausoleum, Frogmore. By E. H. HUDSON . . . 128, 204
Shadowed Forth. By the Author of "In the Dead of Night." . . 352
Story of a Letter, The. By JULIA KAVANAGH 30
Tales of the Past 25
Three Hours in the Rocky Mountains 479
Three Meetings 194
Too Late 240
Two Roberts, The 293
Two Years Lost 216
Under Four Eyes 149
Water-Nixie, The 516
Wood Cutter's Wife 386
Year's Record, A 442
Young Sailor's Story, A 456

POETRY.

Haymaking. By G. B. STUART 80
Under Four Eyes 149
After the Season 160
Too Late. By C. E. GEMMER 240
Lines : "Give me my Youth Again" 269
Autumn Song 292
Chance 320
The Beautiful 385
Hidden 455
The Water-Nixie 478
An Allegory 516

ILLUSTRATIONS.

By M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

Taking Tea with Naomi.
In the West Wing.
Going Back to School.
Coming Trouble.
At Lady Essington's.
Coming Home.

Rupert's Addition to the Family Portraits.

THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHISPERED NEWS.

COLD weather was coming in early. It could scarcely be called autumn yet, for September was but passing; but a bright fire burnt in the breakfast-room at Lord Essington's, in Berkeley Square: a small back room that somehow looked dull even in the sunshine. The earl would have preferred to take his breakfast in a lighter and pleasanter room, but his wife decreed otherwise; and in most things she was master and mistress.

On a footstool close to the fender, roasting one side of her pretty and delicate face, sat a child of some four years old, simply dressed in a cotton frock and white pinafore. Her little feet, encased in their shoes and socks, were stretched out on the hearth-rug, her bright curls were tied back with blue ribbon, and her large, lustrous, light brown eyes, eyes of exceeding softness, were bent over the doll upon her lap. A large wax doll, with fair flowing curls and blue eyes, that had been the gift of Leolin Pomeroy. You have not forgotten her—little Annaline Hetley. Things were anything but smooth at her home, so far as Captain Hetley's finances were concerned; and the good-natured earl had kept the child on, rather to the discomfort of his wife and daughters. Quiet though she was, never putting herself in their way, they considered her presence a trouble.

"Now dolly's Dolly, and I'm mamma," whispered the child, caressing her doll. "And Dolly shall have breakfast presently, and then, if Dolly's good, she ——"

Footsteps, descending the stairs, caught her ear at this juncture, and the promise to Dolly was broken off. Running to deposit the doll on a chair behind the window curtain, Annaline ran back and disappeared with the footstool under the table. Lady Geraldine opened the door at the moment, and advanced to the fire. The child's curls came peeping out from under the breakfast-cloth, as Geraldine crossed the rug, causing her to start back.

"You tiresome little—toad!" cried Geraldine. "How dare you hide yourself to frighten people?"

"Oh, please, I was only putting the stool for Lady Essington," pleaded the child in her imperfect tongue—which it is as well to correct in transcribing. "She likes to have it, you know."

"Well, don't you do it again," retorted Geraldine.

The next to come in was the earl. He lifted the child on to his knee and kissed her heartily. His will was good to keep the dear little thing always; but they were purposing to go from London on the morrow, and she was to be sent home to her father and mother. The illness of his son, Lord Cardine, had detained them at home since Anna's marriage.

"Is my little one ready to go back to mamma?" asked the earl, keeping her fresh cheek close to his own withered one.

"Oh, please let me!" she answered, putting her hand round his neck by way of enhancing the petition. "And you will come, too!"

"Wish I could," cried the earl: and he rose to seat her in the chair that was placed beside his own.

"Your last breakfast here, Annaline," remarked the countess, grimly, when all were seated and the meal was beginning. "I hope you feel grateful for the very long and pleasant visit you have been allowed to make here."

"Yes," said the child, imperfectly understanding: or probably not understanding at all. "Franky shall play with my doll. And, please ——"

"There; go on with your bread-and-milk, and don't talk. Little girls ——"

"Halloa!" broke in the earl. He had opened the letter that lay by his plate, and was reading its contents—only a line or two. "Pomeroy and Anna are coming up to-day."

"What?" cried Lady Essington. "Impossible!"

But the news was true. Leolin wrote that he had to visit London for a day or two on business; must see Mr. Hildyard; and should bring Anna, as she wanted to come. They should break the journey by sleeping a night at Henry Capel's house—which was within an hour of London by rail—and be up early on Wednesday morning.

Wednesday! Why that was this very present day. The travellers might be close upon them then.

"I must say it is tiresome!" cried the countess. "And most of our things packed! When *are* we to get away, I wonder."

"Tiresome!" cried the earl. "I say it is the most delightful surprise we could have had. Never mind about getting away. If I did what I liked I should stay here and not move at all."

"Don't you think, papa, that we might as well settle down at once here for the winter?" put in Geraldine, in as sarcastic a tone as she dared use to her father. "It's just like Anna; no consideration for anybody but herself."

"If you were half as considerate for others as Anna is, you'd be happier, child, than you are," said the earl, smiling at her good-naturedly.

Geraldine did not answer. She had been lately in a chronic state of ill-temper. The Duke of St. Ives had not come forward with any offer to herself, or even to Mabel; no other eligible man, duke or commoner, had come: and this was Geraldine's third season. She slashed off the top of an egg so vehemently that it went flying into Annaline's basin of bread-and-milk. At which the child laughed as merrily as she dared to laugh at Lady Essington's—except when she was alone with the earl.

Before the breakfast was digested, Leolin and his wife arrived. Shut up with the earl in his study, Leolin spoke of what his business was—to consult with Mr. Hildyard as to the steps that must be taken to dissolve the marriage contracted by his brother George, and displace the young child who for the present was called Lord of Pomeroy.

About a fortnight had elapsed since Gaunt's death. Sybilla—who from henceforth must receive her true title from us, that of Lady of Pomeroy—had now appointed another agent, or steward, to manage the property; one James Knox. He was very distantly related to Mr. Knox, of the Knoll, who had aspired to the hand of Mrs. Pomeroy, but was in a poorer condition of life. Gaunt, knowing his capability for the post, and his sterling integrity, had recommended him to Sybilla before his death. Sybilla appointed him, and gave him the lodge, her father's old dwelling, to live in. All this, so demonstrative of Sybilla's power, of her right, did but fan the flame of resentment nourished by Leolin. The sense of injury, rife within him, grew almost beyond bearing; he intended to move heaven and earth, rather than not dispossess the young Rupert.

Lord Essington listened in silence to what Leolin had to say. In fact, the latter was so vehement in enlarging upon his wrongs, that the earl could not get a word in edgeways.

"*Don't do it,*" said the earl at length, as Leolin came to a pause after promising that he should at once move the Vatican. "Don't attempt it. So far as I have been able to gather, this marriage was a just and proper marriage, certainly a legal one, and the child is as much Lord of Pomeroy as his father was before him. Ill dealing does not answer, Leolin; it never does for long, even in this world, and it will not avail us in the next. Can't you feel that?

Had I ever oppressed a poor or weak man to aggrandize myself, I could not die in peace."

"But if you had been wronged, sir?" spoke Leolin, dashing his handkerchief across his heated brow. "If you had had your means wrested from you by a usurper, your very title, would you not do all you could to win them back again?"

"Yes; and think that right of every kind was involved in it, and that I might with a clear breast ask heaven to help me," replied the earl. "But the cases are not similiar, my young friend. Your own succession was a mistake. Had you known of this child, you would not have assumed the honours. You could not have done it."

Leolin was silent. He hardly knew what he should have done: and one of the lesser grievances rankling in his mind was that he had not been told of him.

"Put the case to yourself fairly, Leolin," pursued Lord Essington, who was pacing the room as he talked, while Leolin sat back in an easy-chair. "Were you Lord of Pomeroy, and left a son behind you, how should you like a younger brother of yours to usurp the title and estate, and thrust, or strive to thrust, your own son aside? What would you think of it?"

"About *my* son there could, I hope, be no such discussion," haughtily spoke Leolin.

"Your brother George may have said the same during his life-time. But you are shirking my question, Leolin. I ask what you would have thought were you in the other's place. Would you not say the brother who wanted to put himself in before your son was the usurper?"

"No," said Leolin, hotly.

"Well, well; you are looking at the matter at present through distorted glasses. I can allow for your annoyance, for your vexed feelings: but it must not make you unjust."

"I am surprised, sir, that *you* look upon it thus. Remember Anna. I wedded her as Lord of Pomeroy: and now we are dispossessed."

"I grant you that we feel it, Leolin, her mother especially. But it is a misfortune that no one could foresee, and that neither you nor ourselves are to blame for. Therefore, nothing remains but to make the best of it."

"You and Anna are alike!" involuntarily exclaimed Leolin. "It is just what she says."

"Ay. The child's heart is in the right place."

"But—do you see to what this reduces me?—and her?" asked Leolin, with a lowered voice and flushed face. "I am no better off than when I starved as an attaché. I can return to that at any time, and with a rise, I daresay: Lord C— was pleased to say, when I left, that he knew my value. But I have a wife now."

"Happiness does not lie in riches."

"I had hoped—I had expected that you would have joined me in appealing to Rome."

"What for?"

"To pray that the marriage might be annulled."

"Yours and Anna's?"

"You are pleased to be facetious, my lord," cried Leolin, his brow flushing with pain. "I speak, as you must know, of my brother George's."

"That I never will do," said Lord Essington, a slight dash of severity on his brow. "Neither will you, I hope. There would be no more justice in your seeking to annul that marriage than in somebody else's trying to annul yours."

"We shall never think alike upon this matter, I fear," said Leolin, rising. "I am very sorry you cannot see the affair as I do."

"You will see it differently by-and-by, Leolin. It takes time to get over a smart. Sit down: I want to say something more."

Leolin sat down with rather a bad grace. He was in a fever to be off to the lawyer's.

"You have two courses open to you in this dilemma," remarked Lord Essington. "The one is, to return to diplomacy; the other, to remain at Pomeroy Abbey—as the new Lady of Pomeroy wishes you to do. I should counsel the former course ——"

"No," interrupted Leolin. "For the present I shall remain at Pomeroy, so that my time may be my own."

"As you please. You will go back to diplomacy later, I daresay, when you get tired of being idle. Your income and Anna's combined amount to not much more than a thousand a year, I believe."

"Not much," assented Leolin.

"Well, in a misfortune of this kind, brought about by no fault of yours, it is the duty of friends and relatives to help when they can. I cannot do much; you know how extravagant my son is, keeping me poorer than I need be: but I will allow you and Anna a thousand a year until your fortunes mend. Only—not a word of this to any mortal living, save Anna. Mind that. You must not chatter to my wife."

"How good, how generous you are!" exclaimed Leolin, his heart and face alike glowing, for the kindness touched him. "I hope it will not be for long that we shall need to tax you."

"That will make your income two thousand a year: somewhat more. And while you stay at the abbey you will, at any rate, live rent-free; if you take up with diplomacy again, you will be paid for it. You had better submit to the inevitable with a good grace, Leolin, and not cry over spilt milk."

But Leolin had not the least intention of following this advice. Taking his hat, he went forth to the offices of Hildyard and Prael.

Anna, meanwhile, was with her mother in the breakfast-room, con-

versing upon this same all-engrossing topic—the miserable change of circumstances at Pomeroy. Not that Anna looked miserable: her face was fresh, her smile bright. Lady Essington, who resented the ill-fortune just as angrily as Leolin, complained and groaned over it in style. The earl came in.

"What is this new Lady of Pomeroy like, Anna?" he asked.

"Oh, she is very, very nice, papa," was Anna's warm answer. "A right regal-looking woman, with a beautiful face."

"Educated?"

"Oh, dear, yes. Her education was as good as that of the Miss Pomeroys. She was brought up at the same convent."

"And her descent is good?"

"Very. Equal, possibly, to that of the Pomeroys."

"Then what in the world is your husband making all this fuss for? Saying he shall try to get her marriage annulled?"

"And a good thing, too," put in the countess. "I hope he will."

"The Gaunts were poor, you see, papa, and of quite inferior position. John Gaunt was gamekeeper to the old Lord of Pomeroy. The 'gentleman-keeper,' he was called in the village, because he did not accept pay. His daughter was of course not equal in position to George Pomeroy."

"George Pomeroy might have made a worse marriage, I take it."

"By a great deal. She is so good, so kind, so nobly considerate in all she does. I think she is quite as sorry as we are that Leolin should be displaced—but what, as she says, can she do, save maintain the rights of her son? Leolin will remain for the present at the abbey; he has more right in it, he thinks, than she. But he will not touch any of the revenues, as she wishes him to do. He says he will have all, or none."

"Quite right; it shows his spirit," put in Lady Essington. "He ought to take them all."

"Quite wrong," dissented the earl. "He has no more right to the revenues of Pomeroy now than I have. Do you see that, Anna?"

"Papa, I have seen it from the first. To dispossess this little boy would be wrong and cruel. I try to make Leolin see it also; but my speaking only vexes him."

"You always were a simpleton, Anna," corrected her mother. "A trumpery lad of eight years old, sprung from nobody knows where, has no right to displace Leolin, once he had succeeded to Pomeroy. I should take very good care, were I your husband, that he did not displace me."

In the fleetest cab that Leolin could pitch upon, he made his way to Lincoln's Inn. Hardly giving time to Mr. Hildyard to greet him, he plunged into the point he had at heart.

"This wretched marriage of my brother George's that has come to light. The Court of Rome must be appealed to to annul it, Hildyard."

The lawyer looked at him, and paused. "Upon what plea?"

"What plea!—every plea," retorted Leolin, chafing at the implied dissent. "A marriage of that nature, solemnised in secret, ought not to be allowed to stand."

"Pardon me. I hear that the lady, now Lady of Pomeroy, is in every respect worthy of her position: in beauty, in culture, in intellect, and in goodness. I hear it from your sister—Miss Joan."

"Oh, Joan! Joan was always fascinated with Sybilla Gaunt. Any way, you will have to take my instructions in the matter, Hildyard."

"I still fail to see upon what plea you would proceed."

"No plea is needed; our Church can make its own pleas, you know. Will you take my instructions, or not?"

"As you please. If I decline, you will only carry them elsewhere, I suppose. But it is not a just thing to do, Mr. Leolin."

"Not just! Is it a just thing, do you think, to allow a stray child, never before heard of, to crop up and oust me out of house and home and fortune?"

Mr. Hildyard sighed. "It has been most unfortunate altogether, and I have felt it almost as keenly as you. You did not look to come into Pomeroy ——"

"Why, of course I did not," impatiently interrupted Leolin. "How could I look for it, when George was nearly as young as I? The thought never crossed my mind."

"True. And therefore, had the same mail that brought tidings of your brother's death brought also the news that he had left a son, you would not have felt disappointment. But to have assumed the honours and the property unconscious that they were not yours, and to have married in the unconsciousness, and then to find that all must be wrested from you, it is indeed a hard blow to bear."

"That letter that they say was written to you—what became of it?"

"I wish I knew. All I do know is, that it never reached me. Better that the other had been lost that was posted with it—the one telling of George's death."

Leolin, who was seated opposite the lawyer, drummed for a few moments on the table with his gloved hand, his good-looking face stern and cross.

"George made a will, I believe," he resumed. "Do you know what its provisions were?"

"Yes. His wife takes all, save a legacy to his servant, Moore, and to one or two other people."

"Oh, of course he would leave all to her!" retorted Leolin, rather sarcastically. For, in truth, the very thought of Sybilla put him out of temper.

"The all is not so much," remarked Mr. Hildyard. "Under four thousand pounds."

"Under four thousand pounds!" echoed Leolin, in very astonishment. "Was that all George had saved?"

"It appears to be all he had to leave."

"Then what became of his money? He could not have spent a tithe of his income since he came into Pomeroy. They lived in the quietest and most retired manner possible over there, as I am given to understand."

"I fancy they did."

"What did George do with his money, I ask?"

"It is more than I can say. All I know is, that his revenues, as Lord of Pomeroy, were transmitted to him duly and regularly."

"He ought to have died worth—oh, something like twenty thousand pounds, spending so little as I hear they did spend."

Mr. Hildyard shook his head. The question had more than once occurred to himself, and he had felt a little puzzled over it. "That is all your brother left behind him," he observed, aloud. "What he did with the rest I know not."

"She put it by for a nest-egg, perhaps," suggested Leolin, alluding to Sybilla. "Did you never suspect, yourself, that George was married, Hildyard?"

"I did suspect it. I thought it likely to be the case from a chance word or allusion that he has dropped once or twice to me in writing. I never inquired. I left it to him to tell me more when he pleased—if there was anything to tell. But when the news came of his death, and no mention was made of either wife or child, I concluded I had been mistaken. George ought to have told me; and, no doubt would, had he foreseen his sudden death."

"By the way—who wrote you that letter?"

"Moore. It was a very short one—briefly giving the bare facts of the death. He said Major Barkley would send me further details."

Leolin took out his watch. He had not come to waste his interview in this desultory gossip, and Mr. Hildyard, much against his will, had to listen to instructions and suggestions on the scheme of annulling the marriage.

"There is one thing I wish to mention to you," observed Mr. Hildyard, when Leolin was preparing to depart; and he dropped his voice to a whisper, as if the subject were a secret one. "But, first of all, let me ask whether you have heard anything lately of your brother?"

"Which brother?"

"There is but one left now—Rupert."

"Nothing. Except that George's widow says he is not dead. It seems George had a letter from him now and then. She thinks he hides himself in desert places unfrequented by man."

"I fear he is in England."

"In England!" gasped Leolin, turning cold with dread.

"I do fear so. And, oh, how imprudent it is! But Rupert was always careless. Were he discovered—tracked out—the consequences might be dreadful."

Leolin could not speak. His heart felt faint within him. "How do you know?" he presently asked. "*What* do you know?"

"I will tell you. A confidential clerk of mine, Collins—you must remember him, by the way: a thin tall man in spectacles, middle-aged, light hair ——"

"Yes, yes, I know Collins," impatiently interrupted Leolin.

"He was in Spain lately, on some private business of mine. Coming back he, for certain reasons, took his passage on board a small Spanish trader, where he expected to find no person whatever but the Spanish crew. However, when he had been a day at sea, he found that she carried another passenger: a sick gentleman, he was told, who kept himself shut up in his private cabin. One night, shortly before reaching Falmouth, to which port they were bound, the vessel came in contact with a steamer; she was thought to be sinking; and, in the confusion and shock, this sick passenger came leaping up on deck. It was Rupert."

"Heaven help him!" cried Leolin.

"He had a large cravat of some kind folded round his neck, but he wore no hat, and Collins knew him at once. The moon was very bright that night, shining full upon his face. It was worn and thin, and pale; but it was Rupert's. Catching sight of Collins, he seemed to recognise him, and dived down again into his cabin instantly. The vessel did get to Falmouth in safety, and there Collins quitted it."

"And Rupert landed?"

"Little doubt of that. But for intending to land why should he have made the passage?"

"I wonder if his misfortunes have turned his brain? None but a madman would attempt to come here under the circumstances. Why, Collins might have taken him there and then. Is he to be trusted?"

"Who?—Collins? Entirely: as you would trust myself. Collins confided the matter to me; but he will never speak of it elsewhere."

"How long is this ago?"

"Not above ten days."

Leolin lifted his hands in alarm. "Why—he must be in England now! Can I see Collins?"

"If you like. I'll call him in."

The clerk appeared. A grave, composed, trustworthy man, who took off his spectacles while he spoke.

"Don't you think you may have been mistaken?" urged Leolin, after a few words had passed, his tone one of intense pain. "I cannot believe it could have been my brother Rupert. Rash though he was by nature, he could scarcely have been rash enough for that."

"It was certainly he, and no other," affirmed the clerk, his whisper earnestly impressive. "I could not be mistaken in Mr. Rupert Pomeroy."

"You were well acquainted with him?"

"Quite well, sir. We had a good deal of business to do for him when he got into the Queen's Bench. I often saw him about that time. I recognised him the moment he came on deck."

"You may trust Collins in all ways," observed Mr. Hildyard, as the clerk withdrew: "rest assured it was your brother Rupert. I thought it right to inform you of this, Mr. Leolin. What his object can be in coming here and running his neck into danger, I know not."

Leolin Pomeroy got back to Berkeley Square in a kind of dream. If his unhappy brother should be taken, what on earth would become of the good name of the Pomeroys?—to what disgrace might it not be brought?

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE CHAPEL.

In the small round room of the south tower, that was appropriated to the studies of the young Lord of Pomeroy, sat that little gentleman himself, with his governess, one fine morning in November. Short though the period of his stay hitherto had been at Pomeroy—but three months, all told—Rupert seemed to have picked up wonderfully. The wan, sickly look had left his face; strength and flesh were returning to him. It seemed that the child had only required European air to bring him round: and all grounds for the fear expressed by his mother to Leolin, that he would not be long here, were passing rapidly away.

When Rupert began to grow better, one of the first acts of the Lady of Pomeroy had been to inquire after a suitable governess. In India she had taught him herself. The governess was soon found: a Miss Haberdale. She was a staid lady of some five-and-thirty years, great in modern languages and accomplishments, had also Latin and Greek at her fingers' ends; just the governess for the young Lord of Pomeroy. Rupert soon grew fond of her: he was of a most affectionate disposition, docile, tractable, and clever. He and his mother had settled down, inhabiting the south wing and south tower. Mrs. Pomeroy remained in the one portion of the front pile; and Leolin Pomeroy with his wife occupied the other front portion and the north wing.

Leolin did not, and could not, keep up the state he would have kept up had he been the lord, but he was almost regarded as such. He and Lady Anna were much visited: they visited in return. The Lady of Pomeroy was glad that it should be so: while she wore her

deep widow's weeds, and while her son was so young and delicate, she declined visiting on her own account. As to Leolin, when he was not out shooting or fishing or dining, he was busy in his library over his favourite scheme—the dispossessing of his nephew, George's son. It appeared to have taken complete hold of him; to be, in fact, little short of a mania. One thing Leolin was honourable in—the not accepting any of the Pomeroy revenues. While he was plotting against Sybilla and her son, he would not take her money.

Nothing more had come of that startling communication made to Leolin by Mr. Hildyard—the arrival of Rupert Pomeroy in the Spanish barque. Whether Rupert had sunk into the earth on landing on British ground, whether he had vanished into air, or whether—as was probable—he had thought better of the rash act he was perpetrating, of the risk he ran, and had returned to hide himself within the vessel again, and sailed away with her when she sailed, certain it was that no sign or news came from him or of him. The terrible uneasiness it had brought to Leolin's mind was gradually subsiding. He did begin to hope, to trust, that his most foolish, reckless, and criminal brother had again made his escape for good. There were moments when Leolin thought what a mercy it would be to hear of Rupert's death.

Miss Haberdale, a little, fair woman, her light hair braided back from her quiet face, her dress as neat as she was, sat at the head of the small square table; Rupert was opposite to her, "doing dictation." Just now it was English dictation; presently it would be French; afterwards Italian. Miss Haberdale held the book in her hands, and Rupert wrote on the slate before him. The child was very thin still; but anything more beautiful than his refined face as he lifted it, and the intelligence in his violet eyes, could not be seen. He wore a black velvet dress, made as a tunic, a white cambric collar with a plaited frill.

"In the field we saw a hare," read Miss Haberdale; and Rupert repeated the words after her as he wrote them. "A hare," wrote he, and then looked up.

"We did really see one the other day, you know, Miss Haberdale. Father Andrew ——"

"Yes, yes, I know. But you must write now, Rupert, not talk. Go on The hare was running across ——"

An interruption. The room door opened with a bang, and in rushed Miss Mary Pomeroy.

"Now!" exclaimed the governess, displeased, "how often have I told you, Miss Mary, that you are *not* to come to these rooms during lesson time? I cannot allow it."

Miss Haberdale had cause to speak. Mary Pomeroy was a great deal fonder of being in the Lady of Pomeroy's wing than of staying in her own. But for controlling influence on both sides, she would have been there always.

"I have nothing to do, so I am come here," announced Mary, defiantly. "I am come for the whole day. Mamma called after me, but I did not listen."

"Miss Lorne is following to take you back, I hope."

"Miss Lorne's gone," said Mary in triumph. "Her father's very ill; she had a letter to say so; and she is gone home for a week to nurse him. Croft is driving her to the station. I shall stay here with Rupert all the time that I have no lessons to do."

"I think then, as Miss Lorne is away, that you had better bring your books and do your lessons with me."

"I think *not*," dissented the young lady. "You are not my governess, Miss Haberdale, and I want a holiday."

"Very well. Then I must beg of you to quit the room."

Miss Haberdale had a way of exacting obedience, and Mary knew it. But she was very unwilling to go; she liked her own will and way.

"You have no right to order me, Miss Haberdale. The room is Rupert's, and if he chooses to have me here, he can: he is the Lord of Pomeroy. I shall stay here, shall I not, Rupert?"

Poor Rupert looked distressed—never was there a little heart more sensitive than his. Between the appeal of Mary, which touched him, and the consciousness that obedience was due to his governess, he was in a dilemma.

"I should like you to stay, Mary; if—if you may," said he with hesitation. And Mary drew up a chair.

"No," dissented Miss Haberdale, decisively. "Not unless you get your slate and do the dictation with us."

"Do, Mary," whispered Rupert. "And I'll ask for you to dine with me."

It ended in the young lady's fetching her slate. The prospect of dining with Rupert was all-potent.

In the afternoon the two children went out together, attended by Bridget. The fine day, so bright in the morning, had become overcast. The skies were of a dull leaden colour; but the air was still and mild, almost warm. In fact, the day was already declining, for they were late in starting.

They crossed the cloisters to the quadrangle, passed through the abbey gates, and bore round to the right. "I am going to see old Jerome," announced Mary, in her authoritative manner.

Away flew the children to the Keep, Bridget after them. Bridget, passionately fond of Miss Mary Pomeroy, gave in to most of her whims without a word of dissent, and suffered herself to be led anywhere. Arrived before the door of the Keep, Mary seized the bell-handle and rang on without cessation; her usual mode of announcing herself. Old Jerome, looking sadder and greyer than of yore, opened the door.

It admitted them into a small inward recess, and thence to the

ower room: the same room where that foolish Lady of Pomeroy, Mary's mother, had once sat on the stone ledge, talking with Rupert. The room was furnished now: Jerome made it his kitchen. He drew forth chairs for the children, he and Bridget standing.

"My governess is gone away for a week, Jerome. Are you glad?"

"Very, Miss Mary, if you are. And how, sir, is the lady to-day?"

"Oh, she's very well," said Mary, not allowing Rupert time to answer. "I had dinner there to-day. Jerome, we can see your Keep if we put our heads out at the windows of the south wing."

"Ay, I know that, Miss Mary. Knew it before you were born."

"How old you must be!" exclaimed the young lady. "And, Jerome, did you like the big piece of plum-pudding I made Bridget bring you yesterday?"

"It was rare and good, Miss Mary. Bless your little heart for thinking of your father's old servant!"

"You were my grandpapa's servant," corrected Miss Mary.

"Ay, and your papa's, my dear. I am your papa's true servant ever—faithful to his memory."

"I am going upstairs," proclaimed Mary: and, without saying with your leave or by your leave, she darted to the door that opened upon the narrow staircase. Sometimes Jerome kept this door locked. Mary had once stamped her foot in anger, and ordered him to unlock it when he would not.

The door was free to-day, and the children ascended the narrow and winding stone staircase. A door on the right led them into a room that Jerome called his parlour. It was tolerably well furnished with a carpet, some books, and other things for comfort. The deep window, not much better than a loop-hole, looked towards the abbey, and had a distant view of the sea. Above this were two other rooms, in the smaller of which Jerome slept. As to the parlour, he seldom used it, contenting himself with the lower room, the narrow casement of which gave him a view of the open country and the pine forest in the distance.

Restless by this time, and anxious to be on the move, Mary led the way down, said good-bye to Jerome, and left the Keep. Her quick eye caught sight of something unusual at the door of the chapel.

"Look there, Rupert, at that truck! What are they going to do? I shall run and see."

A small marble tablet was about to be placed on the south wall inside the chapel, to the memory of George Pomeroy. Sybilla had given the orders for it when she returned; it was now ready to be fixed. The men, charged with the business, had brought a truck full of articles that would be required when they proceeded to work on the morrow, and had left it at the door.

The children went into the chapel, Rupert reverently doffing his straw hat, and both crossing themselves with the holy water. Their further progress was arrested by Bridget, who caught Mary by the arm.

"You can't want anything in this gloomy chapel, Miss Mary. I don't like it when it's empty. And we shall have no walk. Master Rupert, please to come back."

Mary's only answer was to shake off Bridget's hand, and pull Rupert forward. Deep down underneath the principal aisle lay the remains of Mary's father. The children trod reverently, and halted when they came to the stone that covered him; a flat stone let in smoothly to the flags, the initials of his name and the date of his death being alone cut into it.

But on the wall to the right, between the white marble tablet that recorded the death of the old lord and the place where was about to be placed the one to the memory of George, rested the tablet to Guy. Mary read it aloud. Rupert was gazing about him with awe—that reverent awe of the sacred place and of all things sacred, to which his mother had trained him—but he cast his eyes up at the gilded letters as soon as she began to read. The inscription was in Latin; but the child read it correctly and understood it as well as that good Latin scholar, Father Andrew himself. Translated it would have read thus:—

"Sacred to the memory of Guy, Lord of Pomeroy; who met with a sudden and violent death on the evening of the seventeenth of October, 18—, in the thirtieth year of his age; and whose mortal remains lie in the vault underneath this chapel. R. I. P." After that followed a few lines expressive of the virtues of the deceased, and of the sorrow of the friends that mourned him.

"Jerome says if papa had lived he would have made the best lord that Pomeroy has known," observed Mary after a pause.

"I have heard papa say that too," answered Rupert. "He was very fond of Uncle Guy.—Mary, look: there's Bridget beckoning to us."

Not the slightest notice did Mary take of the hint. She moved onwards a step or two and began to read, aloud as before, the inscription to the memory of the old lord, her grandfather.

The shades of evening seemed to be gathering quickly over the chapel, never light in the brightest of days. The sun could not penetrate through its dark stained windows, some of which represented scenes of the crucifixion. Bridget, standing in the doorway, did her best to recall the children. When the chapel was lighted up with its candles and full of worshippers, Bridget had no objection to make one amidst them, or even to go periodically to confession supported by three or four other penitents: but to be in this place as now, at the close of a gloomy afternoon, where the dead lay at rest—or not at rest—and nobody about but these two children, she did not relish it at all.

If there was one element more prevalent within the mind of Bridget Rex than another, it was superstition: and since an unpleasant story had reached her ears about a year ago, she had not liked the chapel. It seemed to her now to grow more gloomy with every moment.

"But we must go," observed Rupert at length, his quick young eyes detecting the signs of discomfort on the woman's face. That courteous, sensitive consideration for the feelings of others, which had characterised George Pomeroy, was possessed by his little son. "I shall go, Mary; Bridget looks as if she were about to cry."

"She is only afraid of the ghost," replied Mary with equanimity.

"What ghost?"

"One they talk of. Bridget saw it once, and if she saw it again she would die: I heard her say so to Mary Lamp."

"But where is the ghost?" persisted Rupert, who was undoubtedly less learned on the subject of ghosts than the young lady herself. "Is it in the chapel here?"

"It is in many places, I think. It is not the nun's that used to haunt the west tower, but another. It must have been a man once, for Bridget calls him 'he;' but she won't tell me about it."

"And would you like to hear?"

"Of course I should. I like to hear about ghosts. They don't frighten me."

"There she is again—calling to us in a whisper and beckoning. I shall go back, Mary."

Probably because there was nothing more she cared to see or read in the chapel, Mary took the initiative and walked back to Bridget. Glad to get them at any price, Bridget did not scold; but whisked them both as quickly as she could beyond the inner door. And there they met two workmen coming in.

"Just like you!" ejaculated Bridget to the men. "Going off in the midst of your work! Why can't you stay here and attend to it?"

For, if these men had been about, to impart life to the place and courage to herself, Bridget's discomfort would not have arisen.

Mary announced her intention of going up to see Naomi Rex, and turned off towards the forest. Bridget told her it would be too far, at this late hour; to which remonstrance the little lady turned a deaf ear.

Past the Keep, past the field beyond it, down into the hollow where stood sundry haystacks, went the children, Bridget following closely upon them. Bridget did not like that hollow any more than she liked the chapel; and she seized Rupert's hand for company, and held it until they were well up towards the hill that would take them past Mrs. Wylde's. This field way was a somewhat nearer route than the road through the village; but Bridget never chose it unless the sun was shining.

Nothing has been said hitherto of a very unpleasant matter that had for a long time past been disturbing the equanimity of Pomeroy. But the reader must now hear of it, unwilling though he may be give ear to a tale of superstition. The Pomeroy household believed that their ill-fated master, Guy, did not rest in his grave.

The retainers at the abbey, and the village in general, given over to sufficient superstition before, were made ten times more timorous by the tragical scene in the west tower which had ended the life of Guy. Therefore, when dark rumours arose, and they did arise immediately, that Guy's spirit could not rest, but came abroad to terrify the world, people were only too well prepared to give credence to it.

Half a dozen times, perhaps, in all, and at different periods since his death, had Guy, Lord of Pomeroy, appeared to the living. Such, at least, was their own undoubted belief. Singular perhaps to say, the first person to see this apparition was Bridget—unfortunately for her own peace of mind. It was on the night of his funeral: a very few hours after he had been laid in his grave beneath the chapel. She was passing along this same lonely field road that she and the children were traversing now, and in the hollow by the hay-stacks, she saw, or fancied she saw, the dead man. Frightened out of all self-control, Bridget alarmed the neighbourhood with her shrieks, and when she got home declared the cause of her terror—the dead lord had appeared to her.

The commotion this caused amidst the numerous retainers of the abbey, out-door and in-door, the discomfort that took possession of them, the impetus it gave to the superstitious dread innate in every heart, could not be adequately described. Within a day or two another servant had seen the same appearance, and at very nearly the same spot; and then the under-keeper, Bardel, a cowardly man in regard to superstitious fancies, was nearly thrown into fits by the same sight. Once or twice since, much later, the apparition had again been seen; the last time being in the chapel, some two years ago.

A respectable man named Cox, who had been head of the servants and custodian of the keys since Jerome resigned, was taking a message to Father Andrew from Miss Pomeroy, then staying at the abbey. It was the seventeenth of October, the fourth anniversary of Guy's death. This man, it should be said, was less superstitious than some of his fellows; in fact, was rather brave than the contrary, and thought nothing of passing along uncanny places at night. Cox reached the priest's, and found he was not at home; la Marget, his servant, thought he might be in the chapel, adding another mass to the many masses that had been said that day, and she bade Cox take the key, if he liked, and let himself in at the front door. Father Andrew generally entered by his own little door in the vestry, and had his own key to it. Thinking nothing, Cox took the key and walked round to the front entrance; it was a bright night, the stars well out; and he opened the door and entered.

The chapel was in darkness; no sign was there of Father Andrew; no mass was being said. All in a moment, as Cox stood just inside, hesitating whether to call out an inquiry, to make his stumbling way up to the little sacristy, where the priest possibly might be, or to retreat altogether, a faint light dawned in the middle of the chapel—a kind of halo, Cox described it afterwards—and there, in its midst, he saw the face of the dead Lord of Pomeroy, Guy, who was standing on his own grave. How Cox, brave though he was constitutionally, got out of the chapel and back to the abbey, he did not say. After all, Father Andrew was at the other end of the village—at the White House, visiting a sick servant of Mrs. Wylde's.

These superstitions were shaking the household of Pomeroy; and if a word was now and again allowed to drop in the hearing of quick Miss Mary, perhaps it was somewhat excusable. To Mrs. Pomeroy nothing had been said, and the spirit of her dead husband did not, so far as was known, trouble her; to Leolin no one dared to speak, he would have punished any such nonsense severely; but Joan knew of it, and was as implicit a believer as Bridget herself. Was it to be wondered at, poor Joan would wail out in pain to her own heart, that Guy could not rest, dying the miserable death he did die, and unshriven?

Fleet steps make light the way, and soon the children reached the pine forest and the cottage of Naomi Rex lying on its outskirts. Naomi, looking little older than when we last saw her, was at her tea in the twilight. The children seated themselves at the table, and were soon regaling themselves upon brown bread and butter. Our own bread and butter is never half as good as other people's.

"You've come up late, my dears," she said.

"A great deal too late, aunt," interposed Bridget. "It was Miss Mary's fault—staying so long in that gloomy chapel."

"I like the chapel; I like reading about papa in Latin," said Mary. "Bridget's only afraid of seeing the ghost."

Naomi looked quickly at the child, and then at Bridget. "Cut them some more bread-and-butter," she said to her niece: "you'd like it, wouldn't you, dears?"

"Where's Ann?" questioned Mary, as she took a second slice.

Ann was in the little glade close by, picking up sticks, she was told. And away went the restless child to find Ann, bidding Rupert follow her.

"Who has been talking to the child about the ghost?" abruptly demanded Mrs. Rex, as they disappeared.

"Nobody has," confidently asserted Bridget. "She just hears a half-word, and then makes up the sense in her own mind. She's the quickest and sharpest child you ever knew, Aunt Naomi."

"All the more reason for your being careful before her. Don't speak of the topic. Never let a child be scared in its early years."

"It would take a great deal to scare her," retorted Bridget. "She

is as brave as a little lion. As to not speaking of the ghost, we are not likely to do so. It's what we'd rather avoid, especially after the set down Mr. Leolin gave us."

"What was that?"

"Well, Theresa was going to the White House the other night, with some hurried message from Mrs. Pomeroy; she met me in the cloisters and asked me to go with her. Miss Mary was in bed, and I said I would. 'But not if you take the field way through that hollow,' I said to her, unconscious that Mr. Leolin was sitting on a bench in the quadrangle close by, smoking his cigar; 'I dare not go by that place at night for fear of seeing the ghost again;' and we went on talking a little bit, so that Mr. Leolin could not fail to hear that it was his brother Guy's ghost, and that it was in the habit of appearing. My word! He spoke to us in his haughty way, calling us no better than children and cowards, and peremptorily forbidding us to believe such absurdity, or ever to speak of it again. Absurdity, he called it! After living in the great world—France, and those places—men soon forget all they've been taught. Some of 'em get to be atheists, it's said."

Mrs. Rex, a staunch believer herself in all the ghosts ever seen or heard of, anxious though she was to keep such topics from children, nodded her head slowly by way of acquiescence.

"The Pomeroys were brought up in superstition, as it's named, Bridget; took it in with their mother's milk—how could it be otherwise, with the family's experiences? Mr. Leolin may have lost somewhat of it in the world—but it will come back to him; ay, for certain. As to the late lord, poor Mr. Guy, that he does not rest in his grave, I can testify: though why he should come again, or what he wants, is more than I can tell. I saw him with my own eyes, Bridget."

Next to encountering a ghost oneself, the most dreary of all experiences is to sit in the twilight and hear a friend assert that he has seen one. Bridget thrilled from head to foot.

"Yes, I saw him," resumed Naomi, her eyes taking a far-off look through the window in the growing dusk, "and I've never betrayed it yet, Bridget, until now. 'Twas a couple of years, or so, after he died, and I was coming home late one evening from vespers. I could manage to get down on a fine day then, though I can't now. Marget, at Father Andrew's, had asked me in to tea with her, so it made me late. In that narrow glen, just off the lane by Mrs. Wylde's I saw him. 'Twas a beautiful light night, and I sat myself down on the stump of a tree for a rest. My head was full of that trouble about your sister's illness; fearing she'd never get better—as it proved, you know—and I'm sure I was no more thinking of Mr. Guy, or of any of the Pomeroys, than if there hadn't been such people. All at once, as I sat there silent and still, some great tall form sprang up from I know not where, and was close upon me. The moonlight

fell on the face; a dead face, Bridget; and I knew it for that of the late lord."

Bridget held her breath.

"Even as I looked, he seemed to vanish. Oh, how fearful it was, that dead face of his! I crawled on here, hardly knowing whether I was dead or alive. Ann wanted to know what had scared me."

"Did you tell her?"

"Tell her! Tell that young girl! I never, till now, told anyone. The air was getting cool, and had chilled me, was all I said to her. She got down the bottle of elder wine, and warmed a drop: and my teeth chattered as I drank it."

CHAPTER XXI.

A FRAIL BLOSSOM TAKEN.

"MUST you go in to-day, Leolin?"

"My dear, yes, I am anxious for letters."

"But you go in nearly every afternoon, and it is so rare that you are rewarded by finding any letters there. They generally come to you in the morning."

"Some may be there, Anna. I tell you I am anxious."

Lady Anna sighed. She sat in her favourite sitting-room, which was opposite her bed-chamber, her three weeks' old baby upon her knee. The little girl was born in July, somewhat less than a year from the period of Anna's marriage. Anna had got through her illness very well, and would have been supremely happy could she have seen Leolin so.

Bending down to his wife's gentle face, he kissed it fondly, stroked the hand of the sleeping baby, and quitted the room. Anna carried her child to the window, and looked from it to see him mount his horse, which was waiting. As Leolin rode away, his groom following, he looked up to her, nodded, and raised his hat with a gay smile.

Leolin was going to the county town, Owlstone, his chief pilgrimage in an afternoon. His object was to see whether any letters, brought down by the day-mail, waited for him at the post-office: for Abbeyland only had its morning delivery, as of old. You may remember, reader, that poor Guy would now and then make the same journey for the same purpose.

Leolin's mania had increased with time. His thoughts, his hopes, his energies—all were devoted to the one end and aim he had at heart: that of annulling the marriage of his brother George, so that the child Rupert should be debarred from possessing Pomeroy. He was in frequent correspondence with Rome. One of the cardinals, who had known and liked Leolin in the days gone by, had been so won upon by Leolin's representations that he took up the cause warmly. The details, the questions, and the information as to

the English laws, perpetually demanded by letter of Mr. Hildyard, by this same cardinal, or by a man of business representing him, nearly drove the lawyer out of all patience.

But Leolin was finding more trouble than he expected—or, rather, more difficulty. Other people about the court of the Vatican, quite as influential as this Cardinal, were opposed to the scheme; there appeared to be plot and counter-plot; representations and misrepresentations; if the one side made a successful move, the other side got it repressed. Altogether, Leolin did not prosper: at least, success had not yet come to him. What perhaps added to the difficulties of the case, was the fact that it was being worked in secret. Correspondence was marked "private and confidential," now and then letters even came over in cipher, to which Leolin alone possessed the key. The world in general, whether at home or abroad, knew not that Leolin Pomeroy was striving to put aside the young lord in his own favour. That he should eventually triumph, Leolin as fully believed as that the sun shone: and, strange to say, he had faith in the justice of his cause. So does self-interest blind us.

Leolin Pomeroy was honest by nature, honourable, true. But he had become imbued with the notion that a great wrong had been done him; that he, and not the young child, Rupert, had the right to reign at Pomeroy; and all the means he could use to bring this change about, he regarded as righteous ones. He could not bring his mind to see that he was under obligation to Rupert's mother for the advantages he derived from his residence in Pomeroy. Just the contrary. *She* had no right there at all; she was an intruder, a usurper. The abbey belonged in point of fact to his brother, the ill-fated wanderer; the large staff of servants (of which Leolin reaped the benefit, without cost) pertained to the abbey, not to *her*. The revenues—which Sybilla had offered to share with him—he would not touch: and the other advantages, which he did use, he looked upon as a vast deal more his own by right than hers.

On these views he would expound to his wife by the hour together, making Anna thoroughly uncomfortable. The more he talked, the more clear grew her sense of the injury he was contemplating, and its terrible injustice. Anna had left off trying to persuade him to see the matter in the right light and to let George's little son alone: had she continued to argue, unpleasantness between herself and her husband would have resulted. So silent had she been of late, so passive when Leolin enlarged upon his wrongs and his hopes, that he thought she was coming over to his cause.

A semblance of civility was kept up between themselves and the Lady of Pomeroy. The two ladies exchanged a formal visit on state occasions. Anna would willingly have been more cordial, more intimate, for she greatly liked and respected Sybilla. Mrs. Pomeroy was tolerably social with both parties: as social as it had seemed in her nature to be since Guy's dreadful death. The happiest times

were those when Joan was at the abbey; family meetings were then more frequent and less formal. Joan had told Leolin outright that he ought to be ashamed of himself, and that while she was with them she should take care he did not damp the cordiality that ought to reign between his wife and Sybilla, and that would reign but for him. One cannot be always wise: Leolin gave in to his sister's freak, and winked at the tea-drinkings in his own rooms and in Sybilla's.

The problem that had puzzled Leolin, as to what became of the money his brother George must have saved, remained still without solution. Once he had gone so far as to put the question to Sybilla. This occurred on an occasion when he had gone to her at her request about some business connected with the abbey on which she wished to consult him.

"What did George do with his income?" abruptly demanded Leolin, when their conference was over. "It is not possible that he could have spent it. At least, I imagine not, as he lived so quietly."

"I think he did spend it," calmly replied Sybilla. "I believe he did."

"What in?" asked Leolin, after a pause.

"Indeed I do not know. George did not give an account to me, of all he spent."

"Did he put it by?—any of it?"

"Very little, I think."

"But it is inconceivable," persisted Leolin. "All the revenues of Pomeroy—and no more to leave behind him than that paltry sum! I cannot understand it."

"And I cannot enlighten you," concluded Sybilla. "The sum left to me was all the money George had to leave—so far as I know."

Of course Leolin could only abandon the subject. But it still remained on his mind as a thing unfathomable: somewhat of a mystery. To return, however, to the present.

Lady Anna, standing at the window with her sleeping infant, watched her husband ride down the gentle slope and branch off on the road to Owlstone. A sad look lay in her eyes: she was wishing, oh, how earnestly, that Leolin's better nature would return to him; that he would leave the young lord at peace.

"Aunt Anna, we have come to see the baby!" interrupted Miss Mary Pomeroy, breaking into the room in her off-hand manner, as Anna sat down again. Rupert did not want to come, and I made him. He is afraid of Uncle Leolin, you know; but we saw him ride off towards Owlstone."

"You must not be afraid of Uncle Leolin," said Anna, smiling to assure the lad, and taking his hand to encourage him. What a gentle refined boy it was, she could not help thinking; what a slender, graceful form was his, what a *good* face, with its beautiful

features and its transparent complexion. "Uncle Leolin will not hurt you."

"He would like to, though," interposed Mary, who was just as bold in speech as Rupert was reticent. "Uncle Leolin hates him because he is Lord of Pomeroy. He would like to beat him."

"Hush, hush, Mary," said Lady Anna. "See, you are awaking baby. You talk too much."

Rupert bent over the child: a fair little thing, resembling its mother, with her candid and expressive blue eyes.

"How pretty it is!" said Rupert. "May I kiss her?"

"Yes, of course you may," said Anna.

He bent his lips and delicately kissed the infant's up-turned face. Then gently took the little hand between his own hands, and held it.

"I shall love her so very much, Lady Anna—if I may."

"Yes, my dear little boy, you certainly may—and I hope you will," replied Anna. "But you should call me Aunt Anna, Rupert; not Lady Anna. That's very formal."

The boy's face flushed crimson. But a week ago, Leolin had encountered him at his entrance door and sharply enquired what he wanted there. His mamma had said he might inquire how Aunt Anna was, the lad answered with the timid deprecation that he always used to Leolin: and Leolin had given him a haughty rebuke—she was the Lady Anna, and not Aunt Anna to *him*. Poor Rupert shrank away, his heart beating.

"What's her name going to be?" asked Mary.

"I am not sure. I should like it to be Isabel: but your Uncle Leolin wants it to be Anna.

"I should not mind Uncle Leolin," cried the young lady; "I should have it what I pleased."

They were interrupted by the entrance of Leolin's groom of the chambers. The Lady of Pomeroy was below, he announced, inquiring whether she might then pay a visit to Lady Anna.

Of course Anna assented gladly. An eager glance of welcome sat in her eyes as she rose to greet Sybilla. The Lady of Pomeroy, looking like the regal woman that she was, the train of her rich black silk trailing after her, met the welcoming eyes, and the clasp of the hand with as fond a look, as firm a pressure.

How happy they were that afternoon. Sybilla, Anna, the two children, and the quiet baby. The latter so quiet that Sybilla inwardly doubted whether it could be well. Anna ordered tea and they partook of it together, Rupert kissing the little one again when it was taken away by its nurse. How thankful Anna would be to live constantly in this familiar intercourse, and how warmly Sybilla would have reciprocated it, each was conscious of in her own heart.

"Thank you for this pleasant visit," Anna whispered, holding the Lady of Pomeroy's hand when they were about to part. "It is so very rare that you and your dear little son come into the north wing."

"It is so rare that I may venture to come," whispered Sybilla.

Anna understood, and a painful blush suffused her face. "It will come right in time; I am sure of it," she eagerly rejoined. "It was a great disappointment to him, you know."

"I do know it," replied Sybilla. "Yes, it will all be right in time."

A fervent clasp of the still-locked hands; a fond, confiding look into each other's eyes; and the Lady of Pomeroy quitted Anna and withdrew with the two children.

"What glorious news!" almost shouted Leolin.

He sat at the breakfast-table, reading a letter just delivered. It was the morning following his ride to Owlstone, told of above: a ride that had not borne fruit, for the post-office held no letters for Pomeroy. This letter, that he was running his eyes over now, came from Rome, from his friend the Cardinal.

"Glorious news!" repeated Leolin, rising to seek his wife, letter in hand. Anna was scarcely strong enough yet to breakfast with him: she took it in her own room.

"Such news, Anna!" was his triumphant greeting, when he found her. "Here's a letter from my good friend the Cardinal. The Papal Court has decided to pronounce the marriage null and void."

Anna, partly dressed, and wrapped in a white dressing-gown, was bending over the infant's crib in the night nursery. She turned her face towards him. Its expression of sadness somewhat damped Leolin's high spirits.

"Come and look at baby, Leolin. Nurse does not think she is well. See how quiet she lies, her eyes half open."

"Her teeth, perhaps," suggested Leolin, not in the least knowing whether an infant of three weeks ought to cut teeth or not. "Send for Norris, if you don't think her well. But is not this good news, Anna?"

He went back to his breakfast, and to indulge in all kinds of delightful anticipations of what he would do when he was once more Lord of Pomeroy. The child's indisposition passed entirely out of his mind.

But, ere mid-day struck out from the great clock in the quadrangle, the abbey fell into commotion. The infant was in convulsions. Mr. Norris gave but faint hopes of its life; Father Andrew was summoned in haste, and baptised it in the name of Isabel.

A few hours more of life: and, as the dusk of evening was passing into darkness, the young and feeble spirit quitted its earthly tenement and returned to Him who gave it.

Anna's grief was great. Leolin mourned the child in a degree, but not as his wife did: which was only natural. Condolences came in to Lady Anna from the other parts of the abbey: the Lady's

were expressed in a feeling and affectionate letter; Mrs. Pomeroy more formally sent her card with a few words written on it.

But, on the day after the death, when Leolin had gone round to the chapel with Father Andrew to see about the place of interment, Rupert stole to the front entrance, Leolin's entrance, rang gently, and asked whether he might see Lady Anna. He had a delicate white flower in his hand, and wore a suit of black velvet.

"I don't think my lady will see you now, sir," said Cox, who had met the boy at the door. "She is in great grief, you know."

"Yes, I know; but if I *might* see her?" urged Rupert. "Would you mind just asking her, Cox."

Leaving Rupert where he was, Cox had the message taken to Lady Anna, together with a question from himself—should he send the little lord away? But Anna said he was to be admitted.

The tears stood in her eyes as he went in; and the tears stood in Rupert's. Anna kissed him in silence.

"I wanted to tell you how sorry I am," began Rupert. "But please don't cry too much; she is gone up to Heaven."

"Oh, yes," answered Anna, bursting into tears forthwith. "If it had only pleased God to spare her to us a little while!"

"I have brought this for her," added Rupert, timidly offering the flower. "Would you please to put it in her hand? It is quite white: and mamma says she is in white now, with the angels."

Anna took the flower with reverence. Clasping the gentle child to her, she sobbed upon his neck. What a beautiful nature he had, this little Lord of Pomeroy!

(*To be continued.*)

TALES OF THE PAST.

IT is interesting to think of the times when no such things existed as novels and magazines. Poets there were in the very earliest age. But novels are eminently the offspring of modern days, and it is a gift for which we should be thankful. How many an hour of solitude, of indisposition,or of sorrow has been bewitched away by the potent charm of some favourite author. We would then say a few words upon the early days of fiction.

The legends which the imagination of man, in the childhood of his race, has conjured up, blend and mingle themselves in his mind, until, at last, they come to be regarded as actual reality. Thus facts having their origin in pure history after a few generations become hardly distinguishable from fiction. Perhaps few are aware of the venerable antiquity which attaches to the history of Tom Thumb. This hero of infantine romance seems to have had an Indian origin, though he afterwards passed into Scandinavia. This country indeed abounds in ancient and marvellous tales. The cause of this may lie in the long winter evenings, when story-telling about past times was the most cherished occupation of the people, who, dwelling in the thick and gloomy forest, filled their minds with mystic images. The ancient Scandinavian sagas are in fact the great store-house of dwarfs and giants. It is indeed only lately that we have begun to recognise the real existence of these creatures.

Yet it is quite true that there was once a time when both dwarfs and giants lived in the world. Amid much that is of course imaginary, there is also a foundation of fact in almost all the ancient sagas. The dwarfs of olden times seem to have been very like the modern Laplander. They were ugly and short, were clothed in a grey reindeer kirtle, and wore a blue or red cap. Like the Laplander, also, the dwarfs of the old sagas are represented as exceedingly cowardly, cunning, and deceitful.

As regards giants, also, we need not go beyond the Old Testament history to find traces of their existence, nor is it necessary to suppose that these so-called giants were really of any vast size. It is natural that among a rude people a sudden panic should arise on encountering a nation stronger and larger than themselves. A foolish terror would be created by the mere mention of a tall race, and, in time, imagination would create exaggerated and ludicrous images. These, being handed down from generation to generation, became at last the giant sagas of ancient times. Our own Arthur has been lavishly decorated by Arabian poets and Scandinavian scalds. The same genius which plans a novel now might, in other and earlier ages, have written fables or allegories, or plays and poems : for all these

various styles of composition are the same at the root, only modified by the circumstances of the writer and the age and country in which he lived.

In the early ages of Christianity, the great ignorance which prevailed stood in the way of the reception of abstract doctrines; and the plan was adopted of teaching by example, as more likely to fix the attention and work upon the feelings. Thus multitudes of monkish legends sprang up, which were compiled by Gregory of Tours, and others, telling us of the adventures they met with, and the sort of life they led. Charles Kingsley's opening scene in "Hypatia" gives a well-drawn picture of the monastic life in the Egyptian deserts in the fourth century. At the close of the eleventh, and during the succeeding centuries, the wonders performed by the Virgin superseded in popular interest the lives of the Saints. She is always represented as showing great kindness to men, especially bad men, robbers and thieves, and not only forwarding their spiritual welfare, but also looking after their temporal interests, provided they treated her with proper respect. But while the Virgin is the heroine in these compositions, the Evil One is usually the principal male performer.

In the fantastic stories of the barbarous ages, the idea of the Evil One is largely mixed with a grim comic humour. How absurd to our minds is the following story:—

The monks of a certain monastery wished to ornament the gate of their church. One of their number, who was sacristan, and who understood sculpture, placed on it a beautiful image of the Virgin. It was very common in those days to have near the entrance, a representation of the Last Judgment. Among those on the left side was a Satan, armed with an iron hook, and so hideous that no one could look upon him without horror. The original, offended at the liberties which had been taken with his figure, came one day to enquire of the artist why he had made him so ugly. The sacristan plainly told him it had been done from personal dislike, and for the avowed purpose of making him hateful. This did not mend matters and the artist was threatened with vengeance if he did not change the figure in the course of the day. Next morning, when the devil came to look at the alterations, he found the sacristan mounted on the scaffold, and employed in adding new horrors to the representation. "Since you are determined that we shall be foes," exclaimed the irritated demon, "let us see how you can leap." At the same time he overthrew the scaffolding. But the sacristan had no sooner called the Virgin to his succour than her image stretched out its arms to uphold him, and, after suspending him for some time in the air, to give the beholders time to admire this beautiful miracle, she placed him gently on the ground to the infinite disgust of Satan.

Such tales as these, were transmitted from age to age, and were frequently copied in the ascetic works of the following times. From

the shade of the monastery, where they had their birth, they passed into the bosom of private families.

Among the earliest writers of real tales were decidedly the Italians and Spaniards. The romantic character of chivalry, the vicinity of the Moors, who had imported with them the wild and splendid fictions of Arabia, the fierceness of the Spanish passions of love and vengeance, their thirst of murder, their cruelty, placed all the materials of fiction under the eye of the author who wished to use them.

The Spaniard, grave, solemn, and stately, was the first to introduce into romance all the complications of intrigue; the flight and the escape, the mask and ladder of ropes, closets, dark lanterns, trap-doors, and the whole machinery of constant action. The Italians, equally successful in producing novels, differed from the Spaniards in never being subject to the influence of chivalry. We find no example of heroic romance in the literature of Italy. While in France and England national exploits and the rise of the feudal institutions were laying the foundations for this species of fiction, Italy was overrun by hostile invasions, and dependent for defence on the aid of strangers. Besides, the mercantile habits so early introduced into Italy repressed a romantic spirit. In Florence, the profession of arms was even looked upon as degrading rather than honourable at the very time when, in every other country in Europe, the deference paid to personal strength and valour was at the highest.

The Italian novellino of the olden time must not be confounded with the production answering to that name at present. Dr. Johnson once defined a novel as "a short tale usually of love"; and this description answers tolerably well to those ancient romances of which the learned doctor probably was thinking. The word "love," however, had not then the same sense which it bears in these days. In Italy, at the time when these stories were in favour, an almost universal licentiousness prevailed. We read, indeed, of such mystical and ideal love as Dante and Petrarch tell of when singing the praises of Beatrice and Laura; but very different from this sublime sentiment was the sensual immorality of the ordinary Italian.

The morality of English romance, ancient and modern, is by no means without blot. Tristram and Iseult, and more especially Lancelot and Guinevere, are very far from perfect, but the morality of these legends is better than what we meet with in the Italian stories. These tales were introduced into this country in an English dress before the end of Elizabeth's reign, either by translation or through the medium of French and Latin versions. How popular they became in this country may be gathered from a passage in the "Schoolmaster" of Ascham, who complains "that the 'Morte d'Arthure' did not the tenth part so much harm as one of these books made in Italy, and translated in England And that which is most to be lamented, and therefore the more needful to be looked to, there be more of

these ungracious books set out in print within these few months than have been seen in England many score years before."

It can hardly be expected that anyone living in England at the present day will agree with the hard language of Queen Elizabeth's celebrated preceptor. He little thought when writing against these despised tales that they would be used as the fountain whence Shakespeare was to draw, with little improvement, the incidents of his most popular comedies. Shakespeare showed his genius more in the development of character than in the construction of a story, and the audience generally prefer having no change made in the framework of a tale with which they have long been familiar. The spirit also which pervades the works of his contemporary dramatists has drawn its inspiration from these same sources. We may trace the influence of the novelists in many of the humorous passages of Beaumont and Fletcher; and the horror and savagery which are met with in some of the Italian tales most probably supplied the material for those terrible scenes which are found in the dramas of Shirley and Ford.

"The Decameron" of Boccaccio, the source from which Shakespeare derived many of his comedies, is full of stories, some of them interesting even now, in the form of translations. In "The Decameron" is to be found the original legend of the Pot of Basil, which Keats has used in his poem, and which Holman Hunt has taken as the subject of his carefully painted picture. "Don Quixote," also, of the immortal Cervantes, must, we are sure, be known to everyone. "Don Quixote" is, indeed, almost the only book in the Spanish language which can now be said to possess so much of a European reputation as to be popularly read in every country. "It is to Europe in general," says Hallam, "what Ariosto is to Italy, and Shakespeare to England; the book to which the slightest allusion may be made without affectation, but not missed without discredit."

Of all books "Don Quixote" has had the most powerful influence on modern light literature, as it is called. Critics have not been content to read and admire it as a work of genius only, but some German and French Philosophers have attempted to find out in the book a deeper and more profound meaning. For instance, "The fundamental idea of 'Don Quixote,'" says Sismondi, "is the eternal contrast between the spirit of poetry and that of prose." But we need not quote any more, since he is quite wrong: as philosophers often are, when, like the metaphysician, they attempt to explain to another what they don't understand themselves. Lord Byron took a much more correct view of the matter when he said, with as much truth as poetry, "Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away." When Cervantes lived the age of chivalry—that is mediæval chivalry—had almost passed away. Knights were henceforth doomed to appear without armour, and ladies were no longer to be locked up in dreadful castles, and guarded

by fierce giants, in order to be rescued by some valiant knight errant.

We should like to have said a few words about "Gil Blas," and Le Sage, had not the fear of wearying the reader's patience, warned us to conclude. But a book must surely be possessed of some special merit which could draw such high praise from critics so accomplished as Sir W. Scott and Lord Macaulay. The latter has remarked that the oftener he read the work the more charming did it seem ; while Sir Walter has observed that "the whole concoction of "Gil Blas" appeared to him as original, in that which constituted the essence of a composition, as it is inexpressibly delightful."

It would not be a matter of much difficulty to follow out the connection between these old novelists and their modern representatives. Smollett professed to imitate "Gil Blas," as Fielding professed to imitate Cervantes. With Smollett the story is merely something on which to hang a series of adventures happening by chance to the same person. Fielding, on the contrary develops his characters with the greatest care, showing the reader the grounds and reasons why they act as they do. Here again he resembles Thackeray, and indeed if we allow for the change of manners—and the difference is far more outward than inward—there is a strong family likeness between Captain Booth and Rawdon Crawley. If these worthless and good-natured individuals were living in London at the present day, they would doubtless be often falling into similar difficulties; but Booth had one great advantage over poor Rawdon, in having for his wife the charming and excellent Amelia, while the other was tied to the wicked and clever Becky Sharpe.

Smollett was the favourite author of Dickens. In both these is the same quickness to seize any outward oddity, the same love of fun and caricature, while the novels of both abound in autobiographical sketches, such as Roderick Random and David Copperfield. Dickens has also another point in common with Le Sage and Smollett in taking his characters from low life. All the early Spanish tales whence Le Sage borrowed many of the incidents of his novel were made up of the adventures and knaveries of scamps, the picaros, and Gil Blas himself is little better than one of these. Still he is an improvement, and if the origin of the most popular novels of modern fiction, the novel of real life, has no very illustrious ancestry in this respect, it does not differ much from many other excellent things in the world. At any rate it points to a reaction from scenes filled with impossible knights and shepherds to the highways and crowded streets of every-day life, and appeals not to the sentimental feelings of the reason, like the Clelias and Cassandras of romance, but to the healthy wants and weaknesses of common human nature.

E. B.

THE STORY OF A LETTER.*

By Julia Kavanagh.

EVERYONE has heard of Sir John Percy's great lawsuit. It is a great trouble to Sir John. At least, he says so; his first, he calls it; but I always thought that his troubles began with his name. He claimed to be a real Percy. Ill-natured people said that his grandfather had been a greengrocer: this may be true, or it may not, but I never knew a more honourable, noble-minded man than Sir John, and I mean to say that, whatever his real origin, the Percys might have been proud of such a kinsman. There would, therefore, have been little harm in his claim of noble descent, which no one had ever dreamed of opposing, if good Sir John had not thought fit to strengthen it by assuming the temper and deportment of Hotspur. One of his favourite theories was "race," and the transmissions of hereditary peculiarities.

"My dear Sir John," I argued once, "allow me to tell you that type changes. Keen observers tell us that there actually is a periodic alteration in man. He passes from the nervous system to the plethoric, and hence physiologists declare spring those cycles of disease which are one of the puzzles of modern science."

You should have heard Sir John laugh! "My good fellow," he said, "you know nothing about it. Go to Rome: you will find Messalina or Faustina in the Capitol, in old discoloured marble, and you will also find her in the streets with a silver arrow in her hair, looking at you no longer with cold stony eyes, but with a pair of sparkling black ones. Nay, more: I have seen the pure Etruscan type in Rome, a girl whom you could have painted on a vase, holding a mystic serpent in her hand. But need we go so far? Look at me! Am I not one of the old Percys in physiognomy as well as in blood? And unluckily for me have I not got that dreadful Hotspur temper which, as it cannot be vented in rebellion, or on a battle-field, has brought this eternal lawsuit on my hands?"

I groaned, for about one part of this statement there could be no doubt: it was the Hotspur temper that had brought on the lawsuit, and as I candidly believe that Sir John acquired that temper to prove his descent from the same illustrious line as gave Chevy Chase its hero, and Lord Douglas his enemy, I am justified in my assertion that his troubles began with his name.

* This story, and two "Fragments" that will appear in due time, were found amongst the MSS. of the lamented Miss Kavanagh. Other MSS. were also found by Mrs. Kavanagh, but in too incomplete a form to admit of their being published.

Amongst the troubles of Sir John there was one which seemed to me as real as his relationship to the Percys. He complained that all his letters did not reach him, and he laid the blame to his legal opponents. At first, he concluded that they had an agent at the post-office; then he gave up this crotchet for one as improbable, but at least more plausible: the agent was not in the post-office, but out of it; and it was his habit to waylay the postman, and either bribe or drug him, as he might find most convenient; then abstract Sir John's letter—for this knowing agent never took but one letter, though, of course, it was always the right one. This explanation of his losses, however, had to be given up as well as the first; and Sir John's third and last conclusion was the saddest and most ominous of the three, so far, at least, as his peace of mind was concerned: he declared that the agent was one of his three female servants. His only man servant, James, was incorruptible; but Mrs. Green, the housekeeper, Ann, the cook, and Martha, the housemaid, did not, unluckily, belong to that immaculate category. They were changed repeatedly—Mrs. Green became Mrs. Long, Ann and Martha turned into Eliza and Mary, a Bramah lock was adapted to the letter-box: but letters—important letters, said Sir John, all referring to his lawsuit—continued to be lost, or, what came to the same thing, not to reach him.

I began to feel staggered. Sir John was positive, and though very angry, he preserved a sort of calmness in his anger which was unlike Hotspur's wrath, and helped to shake my scepticism. There could be no harm, at least, in trying to assist him out of this difficulty, and I undertook to provide him with a thoroughly reliable servant-girl. I applied to my sister-in-law in the country, a woman of strong sense and much penetration. I sent her down an account of Sir John's predicament, and begged of her to let us have a good, sensible, and honest girl, if she knew such a person in her neighbourhood. Sir John preferred a girl from the country. "It is the lover who ruins everything," he said, "and the lover is the growth of time. If I can have a fortnight's fidelity, I shall be well pleased." By return of post my sister-in-law wrote: "I have got the very girl you want; she is a heroine, neither more nor less. She spent ten years in my cousin's family, and saved their youngest child from drowning by her presence of mind. Twice the house was attacked by burglars, and twice Nelly displayed the calmest courage. On one of those occasions she was *alone* with the children. Her fidelity is beyond suspicion. I defy anyone to bribe Nelly. For the last three years she has been engaged to a young man of the best character; a carpenter; and it is for his sake as well as not to leave her mother and her little sister, that Nelly would not go to Australia with my cousin. The children were broken-hearted at the parting."

This high-flown eulogium concluded with the intimation that Nelly would be very glad of a situation in Sir John Percy's household, and

especially of the liberal terms he offered, and that she would leave S—— at once, and call upon him the next day.

Sir John was taking his breakfast, when Mary, the housemaid, came in and said that "a young person wanted to speak to him."

Great was Sir John's surprise when the heroine of my sister-in-law's letter entered. A little childish thing stood before him.

"Why, my dear, how old are you?" he asked, in some dismay.

"Twenty-five, sir," replied a quiet little voice.

Sir John looked at her. Yes, there were some of the lines on that young face. And, though it was a young face, with slight features, it was a remarkable face in its way: pale and resolute, with dark eyebrows, and dark eyes looking quietly at you from beneath their arch. "What is your name?" he asked, a little abruptly.

"Ellen Kelly, sir."

Yes, she was Irish, and that was a drawback. Not that the prejudice which forms a part of the traditionary John Bull found any room in Sir John Percy's mind; but he had been jilted, poor fellow, by an Irish girl, who had Ellen Kelly's eyes, and he considered this coincidence ominous. He assured me afterwards that if it had not been for my sister-in-law's sake, he would have sent Ellen back forthwith: he said so, but I rather doubt it. I have a fancy that those eyes of hers were pleasant to the good old bachelor—a memento of his young days that had a charm of its own.

"Well, Ellen, he resumed after a while, "I have heard a good account of you, and I trust you will justify it. Though you are but a small thing to be a heroine, we all know that the best goods are made up in the smallest packets. I am a good deal out, all on account of a confounded lawsuit which I have had in hand these thirty years, and I want a faithful, trustworthy servant to sit in this room and receive my letters. The housekeeper will give you some needlework to amuse you, should you need such entertainment; but you are to sit here from eight in the morning till twelve, and from two in the afternoon till evening. When you feel tired just touch that bell, and James will come and relieve you. He is too old and too active to bear the confinement—otherwise I should require no one else. And now, Nelly, please to mind my words. I suspect neither the housekeeper nor either of the two servants. I have laid traps for them, and they have come out of the snares white as driven snow; therefore I have no right to mistrust them; but I expressly desire you to act with as much prudence as if they were one and all bent upon stealing my letters. In short, you may be as civil and as friendly as you will, but you are not to trust them. That will not be pleasant, will it, eh?"

"No, sir; but I knew as much before coming."

"Well, then, as I said, you shall sit here and sew. When the postman comes, go and take the letters from him. I had a box, but I have suppressed it."

"And where shall I keep the letters if you are out, sir?"

"In your pocket, my dear, and do not let a soul lay a finger on one of them till I come in, and you hand them to me."

"Very well, sir."

"That is not all, my dear. You have relatives, I believe."

"Mother and my little sister, sir."

"Do you expect any letters from them?"

"Mother can't write, sir, and my little sister is only seven."

"Nevertheless, you expect to hear from them?"

"We have a friend, sir," replied Nelly, blushing a little, "a sort of relation of ours, who will let me know how mother and my little sister are getting on."

"In plain speech, you have got a sweetheart—don't deny it."

"I do not deny it, sir," replied Ellen, rather warmly; "we are to be married as soon as he has saved a little money to set up business on his own account."

"Quite right; but my object in putting all these questions to you is simply this: when your sweetheart writes to you, you are not, if you please, to read the letter, but simply to hand it over to me."

Ellen turned crimson. No, she could not do that. She was very sorry to disoblige Sir John, but she could not do that.

"But my dear," he argued, with a smile, "I have not the least wish to read that young man's letter, and, as soon as you have handed it to me, I shall give it back to you. I trust you with all my letters: can you not trust me with one of yours now and then?"

Still Ellen demurred. Her letter was her own, and it was plain that Ellen wished to do with her own what she pleased, and be subject to no one's control. But Sir John was firm, or, if you like it, obstinate; and, after some hesitation, and with evident reluctance, Ellen yielded. "Mind, you give me your word to obey me in all these injunctions," said Sir John.

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Well, then, repeat them for me." Ellen did as she was bid, and she went through the series of Sir John Percy's behests with a precision and correctness that pleased him highly.

"The housekeeper shall show you your room," he said, ringing the bell; "and, when you are rested, you can begin your duties."

The housekeeper was a very sour-looking lady, and, having little cause to be pleased with the step Sir John had taken, she treated Ellen with a superciliousness which the girl had the good sense to ignore. She had come to fill a difficult position, and it was useless to quarrel with its inevitable troubles. Presently she came down in a lilac print dress, with plain white collar and sleeves, looking so trim and neat that Sir John was quite pleased with his new acquisition. He made her sit in the bow-window which commanded a view of the street door; he again rang for Mrs. Long, and requested her to provide Ellen with some darning, or mending, or making, as she

pleased, and, having seen this order executed, and Ellen's little hand dive into a deep basket and come forth with a pair of his own stockings, he left her, chuckling and rubbing his hands, with a "Now we shall see."

But alas! what was glee and hope to him was darkness and tribulation to Nelly. This gloomy London parlour, looking out on a gloomy London street, filled her heart with desolation. She had parted that morning with the widowed mother, who had reared her through much poverty and sorrow; with the little sister, who clung to her, alternately kicking or weeping, as her grief prompted; with the true-hearted fellow who had loved her years so faithfully—she had left them all for this strange place, and this strange house, and oh! when should she see them again? Not for six months, perhaps; perhaps not for a year. She had done all that for a little money, tempted by Sir John Percy's liberal wages; but it was hard, very hard, and Nelly felt it keenly. She also felt the change from the country to town. How grim looked those brick houses, with their yellow blinds half drawn down; what a prison air they had, with iron railings guarding them. Nelly had been reared in a cottage, with green fields around it. She had been a servant in a pretty villa standing in its own grounds. The little town where her lover lived had a garden and an orchard to almost every one of its dwellings. And then the lanes, the delicious hawthorn lanes, where they had walked together the very day before this, with Nelly's little sister Jane romping around them, and filling her pinafore with buttercups and daisies: these lanes haunted poor Nelly as she sat and mended Sir John's stockings. Should she ever hear the nightingale sing again, as it sang last night on that lime-tree which smelt so sweet? But a postman's knock came to the door. Up jumped Nelly, and away flew the dream—lane, lime-tree, nightingale and all. She went and opened it: three letters were put in her hand, and, closing the door carefully, Nelly went up with these letters to Sir John, who happened to be within.

"All right," he said; "but I am afraid it is not all right," he added, abruptly. "You have been crying. Have these women already began worrying you?"

Hotspur was up and ready for war, and Nelly hastened to assure him that no one had said a word to her—in fact, that she had not seen a soul since he had left her in the parlour.

"Then what are you crying for?" he asked, looking injured.

"I parted with them all this morning, sir, and this being the first time, and the first day, too, it seems a little hard."

"It is hard," confessed Sir John, "but time will comfort you, or, at least, enable you to bear it."

In her quiet way, Nelly said she hoped so, and she went back to the parlour and to her darning.

Poor Nelly! she soon had other troubles besides those of separation and remembrance. The housekeeper, the cook, and the

housemaid combined to make her life wretched. Mrs. Long found fault with Nelly's sewing, and was bitter on the subject of her darns. "There never had been such," she declared. Nelly felt this acutely. Remember how old and universal an accomplishment darning is, and then imagine, if you can, what it is to be singled out amongst all past and present darners as the very worst of the lot. It was enough to crush Nelly's spirit for ever. The cook said nothing: "Deeds, not words," doubtless was her motto; but she made it a rule to make Nelly eat what she disliked. Nelly hated fat, and Nelly got none but fat meat! Nelly disliked Yorkshire pudding, and Yorkshire pudding became a rule in Sir John's kitchen. The housemaid, too, would not be behindhand. It had been her duty to receive the letters and to attend to the door. Not being now allowed to do the one, she loftily resolved not to do the other. But Nelly, who had been quiet hitherto, and scorned to complain, now rebelled, and showed some spirit. It was contrary to her instructions to open the door to anyone save the postman, for he might come whilst she was showing a visitor upstairs. She laid the case before Sir John. Hotspur flew into a towering passion, and threatened cook, maid, and housekeeper with instant dismissal, if they ever meddled with Ellen again. Nelly had not been loved before, but now she was fairly hated. I fancy hers was no pleasant life, sitting darning stockings in that grim old parlour, taking in letters, and feeling herself detested in the regions below as well as in the housekeeper's room above. But, if his little maid looked rather pale and melancholy, Sir John was in tip-top spirits: he had not lost a letter, so he said, at least, since he had had Nelly. "The dearest little janitress that ever was," he said, "and true as steel, sir. They laid a plot to get her away from the door, but Nelly came and told me all about it. And I gave them a trimming, sir, by Jove I did!"

A month and a day had Nelly been with Sir John when the postman gave her a packet of letters one morning. Nelly's heart beat as she looked at them. There was one for her. It had the S—— postmark upon it; besides, Nelly knew the writing. Now, there is a shy, delicate instinct in a girl's love—a feeling that makes her wish to hide what she is not ashamed of. Nelly longed to slip that dear letter into her pocket, and not let Sir John have a look at it. But she remembered her promise, and went up with it as well as the rest. "Oh! one for you," he said, detecting the stiff round handwriting at once; "there's a good girl, I shall not keep you in pain: go down with it at once." Nell obeyed. She had a warm impetuous little heart, I suppose, spite her calm face, for she was no sooner out on the staircase than she broke the seal and read her lover's epistle. But alas! no dear, no glad, home fragrance did that little sheet of paper enfold: nothing came out of it but the dreariest and the saddest news. Sir John had not got half through his first letter

when the door of his study opened and Nelly broke in upon him, pale, distracted, and her open letter in her hand.

"I must go, sir," she cried, "I must go at once. My mother is dying—she is dying, dying."

She seemed beside herself with grief. Sir John took up the letter she had dropped, and glanced over it. Yes, sure enough, Nelly's mother was dying, and asked to see her daughter "once more."

"Of course you must go," he said, warmly. "I cannot spare you to-day, but you shall start to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow, sir: will death wait till to-morrow? I must go now—now."

"My dear child, I am to be out all day, and I expect a most important letter, and James, poor fellow, is lying ill in bed, as you know—I cannot spare you to-day."

"Sir John," resolutely said Nelly, "I shall go to-day. I am sorry to disoblige you; but I shall go."

"Hotspur had a great deal to do to keep his temper down," said Sir John, when he told me this, "especially as the little chit's black eyes had just a lurk in them which I remembered rather too well. However, I remained quite cool, and all I said was: 'Well, Nelly, I have servants to obey me, and not to have their own way. I give you a month's warning from this very day.'"

"Very well, sir," composedly replied Nelly. "I am sorry to have annoyed you, but I cannot help it."

Hotspur deigned her no answer, and Nelly went. S—— is within two hours of London by rail. It was three o'clock when Nelly reached it. She had to walk a mile from the station to her mother's cottage. Her road lay along the very lane in which she had wandered with her lover a month back; but how sad and changed was its aspect. Its June beauty was gone. The hot July sun had scorched it. The hedges were white with dust; the trees looked athirst for rain; the sky was grey and lowering, and the beautiful country seemed sad and plague-stricken to poor Ellen. "I felt sure, sir," she said to me later, "that my poor mother was dead."

At length she reached the cottage. Her hand shook as she raised the latch and entered. Her lover was the first person whom she saw. He came forward and comforted her with a word.

"Alive and better, Nelly."

"Better!" If he had said "cured," Nelly's joy could scarcely have been greater. She cried, she laughed, she kissed her little sister, her mother, her lover, Mrs. Dering, a kind neighbour who had come in to nurse the sick woman. She could have kissed the ground in the gladness of her heart. Yes, the poor woman who had been dying the day before was better now, and, what was more, the doctor felt sure, from the turn her complaint had taken, that she would live. This glad news Nelly's lover gave her outside the cottage door, for the invalid was too low to hear much.

"You have had a useless journey, Nelly," said Mrs. Dering, coming out to join the pair, "but we had to send for you to quiet the poor dear."

"And do you really think she is safe now, Mrs. Dering?"

"The doctor says he is almost sure of her, Nelly. And how do you like your place? Your mother says it is such a good one."

Nelly answered that it was a very good place indeed; but she sighed as she remembered Sir John's warning.

"You'll be saving lots of money, and coming back to marry Joseph," continued Mrs. Dering.

"I hope so," said Joseph, cordially.

This Joseph was a very good fellow, a steady workman, and he adored Nelly, but he was not very bright, and Nelly never told him her little secret. So, even after Mrs. Dering left them and entered the cottage, she said nothing about Sir John's warning. She knew what a shock it would be to her sick mother, and suppose Joseph should let it out? Joseph was so happy to see his mistress again that he was in the highest spirits. He could talk of nothing but the future, and he could not see that future unless under the rosiest aspect. His song had but one burden to it. Sir John's twenty pounds a year, Ellen's savings, and wedded bliss.

Matters, as he viewed them, went on delightfully. Nelly was to save thirty pounds, and he, Joseph, thirty more. With sixty pounds they could begin life. Of course, this would take time; Nelly must send money home, and Joseph had his aged and helpless grandfather to support; but "with time," argued Joseph, "it could be done." And again followed a glimpse of that married life for which Joseph had been pining for years, as only the poor can pine for love, home, and woman. Nelly heard him, and said not a word. She was very glad to have found her mother alive and "safe," as she said, but a darkness had come over her joy. "Poor fellow! if he knew the truth," she thought, as she listened to him, "and if he knew that every word he utters is a stab to me!" But everyone seemed bent on tormenting her. Mrs. Dering came out again and extolled Nelly's place and salary. Little Jane, hearing so much about money, wanted to know what Nelly was going to give her; and when the sick woman was able to speak, her first words were an injunction on her daughter not to exceed her leave of absence. Nelly must not vex Sir John on any account. She became so excitable on this head that, to pacify her, Ellen asked if she should go away by the night train.

"Yes, you had better, my dear," replied her mother, rather eagerly.

She was as anxious to see her daughter depart as she had been to make her come. Nelly herself was not so sorry to go. The burden of her secret was too much for her. As she left the cottage, Mrs. Dering followed her out mysteriously.

"Ellen," she said, "I have some money unknown to my husband,

and I want poor William to have it. You just take it for me, and he will call for it in a day or two. I can't send it by the post."

She slipped a little silky packet in Nelly's hand. "And do take care of it," she whispered again, "for it is four five-pound notes, Nelly."

Ellen hesitated. William, Mrs. Dering's son by a first husband, had been so beaten and ill-used by his stepfather that he had run away to London years before. But misfortune had followed him, and he was now a sickly widower with three little children.

"You cannot refuse doing that for me," said Mrs. Dering.

"No, no, Mrs. Dering, I will do it with pleasure. But it is such a large sum—suppose I should lose it."

"You'll not lose it, Nelly; there, take it, and do not tell anyone."

"Anyone" meant Joseph, who now came up to escort Nelly to the station. They walked along the shady lane, arm in arm, and, as they had plenty of time, poor things, they lingered. Nelly felt much depressed when they parted at the station, and Joseph saw it.

"You are fretting about your mother," he said. "I am sure she'll do, Nelly; but I'll be sure to write."

"No," said Nelly, nervously, "no news is good news—only write if she gets bad again."

Nelly had her reason for this. "How should I bear the suspense if Sir John was out," she thought. But Joseph said, a little shortly, "Very well, when I write you will know it is bad news."

Nelly wanted to explain, but she had no time to do so. The train was going to start.

"Make haste," said Joseph, hurrying her away. "It is only writing him a line when I get to London," thought Nelly. "Poor Joe! he was hurt."

An accident which had taken place on the line delayed the train, so that it was nine in the morning when it reached the station. Sir John lived at the other end of the town, and it was ten by the time Ellen got to his house. James opened the door for her, and very cross James looked. The poor fellow had been kept on duty almost the whole time she was away.

"A pretty mess you made of it, ma'am," he said, with sarcastic politeness, "and a nice way poor Sir John and I have been in all the time."

"I have not been twenty-four hours away, James," answered Ellen, "and if you will just let me go up and change my dress, I shall be down directly. You can tell Sir John so."

"Sir John is out," was the short reply. "How's your mother," he added, more kindly.

"Much better, thank you."

If Nelly had but said "Much worse," James would have been softened thoroughly, but "Much better" showed what a perverse, tormenting little creature she had been; so he roughly bade her not be long; and when Ellen came down he did not wait till she reached the

bottom of the staircase to go out of the front door. Ellen entered the parlour, and went and sat down in her usual place. She felt giddy with fatigue, and her first feeling was to long for more complete rest than that of waiting for Sir John's letters. She looked out languidly through the wire blind that protected her from the indiscreet glances of passers-by. Darker and duller than ever seemed the houses. Well, she should soon cease to look at them. A month would soon be over, and then she would go back to her mother and Joseph and Mrs. Dering. Here an awful blank followed—what had become of Mrs. Dering's twenty pounds? Ellen rushed upstairs like a mad thing. She searched the clothes she had just taken off—no trace of Mrs. Dering's money did she find. It was lost; that money which the poor mother had taken years to put by for her sick son and his three children was utterly lost.

Ellen's first feeling was one of stupor; then she asked herself the usual question: "What am I to do?"

Ellen had been ten years a servant. She had had to help her mother and her little sister; she had not saved much money; fifteen pounds and ten shillings in all. That money she must now give up to Mrs. Dering, and yet it would not cover her debt. But could Mrs. Dering's money be really lost? It seemed impossible; she searched again with renewed ardour, but the money she had not. She could not imagine how or when it had left her possession—in the lane, on her way to the station, in the railway carriage, or in the cab that had brought her to Sir John's door; but one thing was sure, she had had it, and she had not got it now. To the rich the loss of money is generally light; to the poor it is almost always calamitous. In a moment all the consequences of Ellen's loss rushed to her mind; Mrs. Dering's son must suffer, then Nelly herself. Adieu to many little comforts; adieu to love; adieu to hope itself. The poor girl could not bear these thoughts. She flung herself on her bed and burst into tears. But she was not even allowed to indulge her grief. The postman's knock at the door below reminded Nelly that in her own concerns she had forgotten her master's. She flew downstairs, and she reached the door just as the maid was opening it. Mary looked anything but charmed at Ellen's hasty appearance, and, turning up her nose, she said scornfully, "Perhaps, ma'am, you'll be kind enough to let me have my letter." "There is none for you," replied Nelly, glancing over the letters which the postman had put in her hand; "but, oh, my goodness! there is one for me!"

It was a letter from Joseph, with the London postmark. With a trembling hand Ellen was going to break the seal, when Mary's mocking eye fastened upon her reminded her of her promise. She had forgotten all about it, but she remembered it now: she could not open that letter till she received it from Sir John's own hands. And Sir John was out; he would not come back till dinner time.

Ellen entered the parlour and sat down, with the letter on her

kness. She looked at it as surely letter was never looked at before. Within that square envelope lay Nelly's fate. Either Joseph had written to say that her mother had had a relapse—how she remembered his words, "When I write, you'll know it is bad news"—or he had despatched this letter, following so close on her steps, to tell her that Mrs. Dering's money was safe. The very London postmark was a sign, only it could be read either way. It was plain that something had occurred just after her departure, and which Joseph, on reaching home, had wished to impart to her. He had evidently found some one going to London by the early morning train to whom he had given his letter that she might get it half a day sooner. Yes, all that was plain enough, but it helped her nowise to a solution of the mystery. Joseph knew nothing about Mrs. Dering's money, and, as the lane was dark when he went home after parting from her, he could not possibly find four five-pound notes. Moreover, Nelly searched her memory well, and she was sure that she had not once put her hand in her pocket whilst Joseph and she walked to the station. Then the letter could not refer to the money; it must be to tell her that her mother was worse, and that she, Nelly, must go back at once!

When this thought came to her, Nelly's hand was at once on the letter ready to break the seal, but she remembered her promise, and she paused. What if the letter only referred to the money! What if it was only being patient and doing her duty. For it was her duty. Sir John had given her warning, but she still was his servant, and she still owed him obedience. She had made a promise which she was free to withhold, but, having made it, she was not free to break it. Poor Nelly! I have often wondered how she resisted such temptation. For do not suppose that Satan did not offer her many an outlet. "Break the seal," he whispered, "read your letter, then go upstairs, seal it again with red wax like this, and just tell me if Sir John will be any worse for it? It is your letter after all! Think of your long agony till he comes home, and do this: who will be the wiser?" This was cruelly plausible, and are there many men and women who could have resisted either that suggestion, or the bolder and more honest one of breaking her promise altogether, and not concealing from her master that she had done so? What had Nelly to lose? He had given her warning; this fine situation, with its twenty pounds a year, was gone; she had risked it to comply with her sick mother's wish, and she did not repent having done so. Why should she not win peace when all was lost and risk was gone?

Why are not conscience, integrity, and honour mere words, and not awful realities? Nelly could not do this thing. The sacredness of her word stood between her and her desire like the angel's flaming sword between man and Paradise. For, after all, her reading the letter would change nothing. It would not give her dying mother

life, or restore Mrs. Dering's lost money. "Well, then, I must and I will bear it," thought Ellen.

And she bore it. What tortures Nelly suffered, as she sat in that dull parlour on a sultry July day, with Joseph's letter on her lap, she never told—perhaps she could not. Great mental or physical pain can never be remembered in its intensity, for to remember it would be to go through it again, and Providence is too merciful to inflict the same pang twice over. Still, it must surely have been something terrible for the poor girl to let the slow hours go by and hear the kitchen clock ticking below. Cook and housemaid were very merry together that day. How cruel and how mocking sounded their loud laughter and their idle talk. If she could even have told them her trouble; it might have eased her. "But they hate me," thought Nelly, her heart swelling at the thought. They certainly did not love her, and, though Nelly was a good girl, she had little, short, precise ways; which free, easy, unscrupulous natures must dislike. Not a soul came near her. She sat unheeded and forgotten, neither eating nor drinking nor stirring—but looking at Joseph's letter on her lap and feeling: "Will he ever come?"

When the hour of Sir John's return drew nigh, the suspense grew to be almost intolerable. There was nothing which poor Ellen did not imagine. Suppose he dined out; suppose he did not come back till the morning. Could she or ought she to bear it? Surely, in such a case, she must be freed of her promise. She had never pledged herself to an indefinite waiting.

Sir John was the most punctual of men. He dined at six exactly. Yet at five minutes past six he wasn't at home. "He is not coming home to-day," thought Ellen. Her hand was on the letter; but she paused. "I shall wait till the clock strikes the quarter," she thought, "then I shall see what I am to do."

She had not to wait so long. At ten minutes past six Sir John's knock was heard. Nelly ought to have flown and opened to him, but she did not. Now that deliverance had come, she shrank from it as if it had been a calamity. She never stirred till Sir John entered the room, and, seeing her, rather shortly asked, "Any letters?"

Nelly placed all the letters in his hand. He saw hers, and gave it back to her without a word. Nelly took it and left the room. Sir John was a slow, deliberate man. When one of his letters was sealed, he never broke the seal, but cut the paper round it. He rang the bell to ask Nelly for a pair of scissors. She came in staggering, and, before Sir John could utter his commands, Nelly was in a dead swoon at his feet. "Bless my soul! what is the matter with the girl?" cried poor Sir John, very much startled. He picked her up, and, in so doing, saw a little bit of rumpled paper in her hand. I trust no one will think the worse of Sir John for looking at that paper. It was a short missive—and ran thus: "Money is all safe; mother is getting better and better. Yours truly, J. M."

So it was all right; but the sudden relief had been too much for Nelly. This, however, was Greek to her master. So he rang the bell, and, thanks to water, vinegar, and burnt feathers, Ellen was got round. But she was so weak by the bitter suspense of seven hours that it was some time before she could answer Sir John's questions and tell him her story. She related it very simply, but he heard it with the deepest amazement. "By Jove," he cried, "there was never anything like it—never! And so, not knowing but that the money was lost or your mother worse, you would not read the letter."

"No, sir," quietly answered Nelly, "I could not break my word."

"You are a noble girl," cried Sir John, with a touch of Hotspur enthusiasm, "and I'll tell you what, Nelly, if I was ten years younger —I would marry you."

"But I would not marry you, Sir John," demurely answered Nelly.

"Of course you would not," he ruefully replied. "You would not jilt a man, and poison the rest of his life. You would not do that."

That absurd Sir John! with poisoning his life indeed! I wonder how much poison it takes to produce my worthy friend's—I will not say how many stone; or to give a man that bluff rosy face, or that hearty voice and jovial "Ha! ha!" Poison indeed!

There came another letter from Joseph the next morning, explaining everything.

Need I say that Sir John rescinded the warning he had given Nelly, and that he authorised her to open her letters the moment the postman put them into her hands. So, though he was out, she read this one, which as I said, explained everything. Ten minutes after Nelly had left her mother's cottage, Mrs. Dering found the notes in the garden. As soon as Joseph returned she told him the whole story. At once he wrote, but it was too late for the post, so Joseph went to the station, and a friend whom he had there promised to find him a safe messenger in one of the guards, by whom his letter should be posted in London as soon as the first train came in.

"Oh, Joseph, Joseph!" thought Nelly, "if you had only written your letter outside instead of inside, what a world of misery you would have spared me."

"Why did he not send you a telegram?" indignantly asked Sir John. "But, sir, argued Nelly, "I should not have opened that either; besides the letter came as fast as myself—it was all the promise."

Yes, it was all the promise, and Sir John did his best to atone. Nelly and Joseph have been married years, and their prosperity is not the mere offspring of their labour and industry. A kind helping hand has often been stretched out towards them. "But I owed Nelly more than I ever did for her," says Hotspur. "Would you believe it, sir, ever since that girl left my house my letters have gone wrong again."

I have no doubt Sir John would like me to believe *that*. As if I could!

THE ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ISLANDS.

By Charles W. Wood, Author of "Through Holland."

WHO that has visited Shetland can forget the delight of being out on the water day after day: each day not diminishing but increasing the pleasure? Sailing out on the broad sea, yet never losing sight of land. Parting from one island only to come upon another. Or cruising around and beneath the rocks, wondering at their majesty and grandeur, exceeding anything that we possess in England. A long way to go up for rock scenery, perhaps, but the end is worth the trouble and the time.

In this, above everything else, lies the great charm of Shetland. The water is clear and transparent, and seems to possess every rainbow tint. The sun pours down his rays upon rocks and water, and you bask and revel in a wealth of warmth and colouring. This tone and colouring of the islands is marvellous, and gives beauty to a landscape that is otherwise barren and would be unattractive: a beauty almost greater, and certainly more uncommon, than luxuriant vegetation and leafy trees that wave and rustle with every passing breeze.

This peculiar tone and colouring cannot be realised by the imagination. Every aspect has its particular phase of beauty. The dull morning with its grey clouds that clothe the whole face of nature, land, rocks, and, sea, in sombre tints that are yet not without a charm: and the sunny day, when all is so bright and glowing that the spirit cannot fail to catch the prevalent influence: when earth seems to have returned to a state that half appears to realise our ideas of Paradise: when every tint is flashed, from every ripple of water, on all the surrounding land and sky. The great difficulty is to leave all this when the time comes for turning southwards and buckling once more to work. Hard times, those first days of harness.

It must be something of this that causes almost everyone who once visits Shetland to go there again. He who has "paddled his own canoe" in these waters will scarcely content himself for ever after with the tamer shores of England, without at least one return to the smiles, frowns, and fascinations of this new love.

The coast itself is so broken and diversified that all idea of monotony is done away with. You never can see a great deal at once, never take in all at a glance. You are continually turning bold points of rocks which open up grand and unexpected surfaces, or launch you in bays or voes that creep up into the land in most unexpected forms. If the water be only a little rough, it whirls

and plashes round the base of the rocks, falling back upon itself in foam that washes the little skerries in rich seething cream.

But there are days when the sea is angry and turbulent; when he must be a skilled boatman to venture out upon the grey water, who wishes to get back safe and sound; when it demands a knowledge of the coast to keep clear of the hidden rocks towards which you may be driving. One little touch at this present rate of sailing would smash up the boat like tinder, and send you surging into the water, and speedily land you beyond the mysterious boundary that separates the living from the dead. Not only the hidden rocks, at such times, but those rising boldly out of the water, must be looked to: for you are drifting along, and an under current or a whirling eddy may render you powerless to escape the mischief, almost before you are aware of its existence.

The rocks about Lerwick are indeed magnificent. Rising to an immense height, jagged and broken, weatherbeaten and honeycombed with the lapse of ages. Many almost perpendicular; so that when beneath them in a little boat and looking upwards, you hold your breath with awe at their power and grandeur: the overwhelming size and extent of their surface. All around and about you birds are flying and screaming with wild clang, manifesting every symptom of alarm and anger at your approach. Or perhaps they have settled down to watch. There is no sound or motion amongst them; nothing but a slight twisting backwards and forwards of their little necks, and a twinkling of small bright eyes. On your part you are motionless, and they perhaps fancy themselves unobserved. Once within shot, up goes the gun. Immediately the air is filled with a multitude of birds, and the noise is so deafening that you scarcely hear yourself speak. Perhaps the shot has knocked down half-a-dozen young cormorants: and the boatman uses every effort to secure the prize, and bumps you up against the rocks, almost jeopardizing your life in his endeavours. When two or three have been dragged into the boat, and their ferocious-looking bills have opened and closed in a last gasp, there is another tint in the water to add to those of the rainbow; it is red and warm. All sports, fair reader, have their cruel side: the law is universal, where it concerns the shedding of blood: life waging war upon life. The boatman smacks his lips with a foretaste of the grand meal the wife will make him on the morrow out of these cormorants.

No stranger should cruise about these shores unless accompanied by some one, friend or boatman, who is thoroughly acquainted with them. Otherwise he will almost infallibly come to grief. Again, the weather is so changeable and treacherous that in a moment, if not accustomed to watch and understand its signs, he may be overtaken and swamped. The water is often disagreeably choppy, and though this leads into no particular danger, it is something to be able to steer so as to keep dry decks. One man will ship sea after sea,

and drench you to the skin, whilst another will cunningly avoid them all.

But there are days, and many of them, when it is impossible for the most skilful boatman to venture out: when in one moment the sail would be in ribbons and the craft capsized. Days when the wind rushes about at the rate of seventy miles an hour, and shrieks and moans, howls and whistles, as if haunted by a legion of condemned spirits. When you can scarcely venture to walk upon the rocks for fear of being blown into the boiling trough. When the waves are angry and roaring, and break, break, break eternally in all directions. When long rolls come sweeping in with a raging force, and hurl themselves in all their fury against the rocks: until you fancy the very ground shakes with terror, as the waves crash with a roar like ten thousand cannon, and turn like whirlpools amidst the skerries, and dash the spray upwards to an amazing height, which seethes far back in a sheet of white foam: only to be gathered up the next moment by another mighty oncoming wave, that in like manner spends its vain wrath upon the everlasting bulwarks.

At such times the sight is awful and magnificent. You realise the wonderful power of the sea in its anger: realise it with a comfortable feeling of self-security with your foot planted on the summit of a high rock. Your affection for this same rock increases with its sense of stability and protection: you marvel that century after century it is able to resist this mighty power, and show no sign of weakness or decay. You watch the boiling surge; the water heaving and falling in all directions like miniature hills and valleys convulsed by an earthquake; you listen spellbound to the mighty and tremendous roar of each wave that breaks upon the rocks, and hisses up into all the clefts, and chokes the mouths of the caves. You watch, far out at sea, the struggles of a ship, pitching and tossing, and driving before the wind; you hear, in imagination, the flapping of the canvas as she shortens sail, the straining and creaking of her timbers. And you realise that you are on an island; that all this waste of water must be passed when, like the swallows, you wish to take flight: and you fervently hope these angry moods may, like all other angry moods, yield to the influence of time.

One of the charms of Shetland, one of its especial characteristics in fine weather, is the peculiar lightness and brightness of the atmosphere, which no doubt gives to the islands so much of their vivid colouring. I have also seen in Shetland what I have never seen elsewhere. I have watched, when upon the water, a glowing sunset and a brilliant moonrise at the same moment of time. I have noticed the nearly full moon whilst the day is yet bright, borrowing the tints of sunset, and rising in gorgeous light. The sky has presented a marvellous appearance. Its colours are many and wonderful. Every tint of beauty can be traced; from the glow of opal and violet in the north to the crimson streaks and flames the sun is

darting upwards whilst he sinks low and lower in a bath of liquid gold. Small red clouds float about in all directions, whilst the moon in the east rises and shines a pure rose colour. Earth and water gather up and reflect these tints, every ripple repeats and multiplies them. It is a transformation scene in nature more beautiful than fancy can imagine. You gaze around in silent wonder. Every moment the scene changes; every instant the colours are shifting, until one blends with and melts into another, and the vividness departs as twilight gathers. The moon, as she rises, eclipses one by one the many tints of sky, until at length she overpowers everything with her own bright light, and bathes all nature in silvery beams.

And then the water takes up the tale. As darkness increases millions of phosphorescent gems are stirred into light by every ripple. Each dip of the oar casts around you countless jewels. Through all this silence and beauty, when the last stray bird has sped its rapid flight across the water to its roost; when no sound is heard save the imperceptible plashing of your boat as she glides through the water with the tide: when you yourself are quiet, unwilling to interrupt the spell that has cast itself over the mind: suddenly, from the shore, from the air, from yonder high point of rock: you hardly know whence or where, unless it be from that distant boat, with its oars lying idle in the hands of the rowers: a chorus of manly voices rises and pulses over the water, and Addison's fine hymn is given out. Every syllable is distinct, and the words thrill through you as they never did before :—

The spacious firmament on high
With all the blue, ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings, as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark, terrestrial ball;
What though no real voice or sound
Amidst their radiant orbs be found;
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing, as they shine,
"The Hand that made us is Divine."

The words so harmonize with the scene that henceforth they become inseparable.

I do not say that other latitudes possess not all this beauty and richness of colouring, but they are latitudes I have not visited: and I do say that these sunset and moonrise effects are one of the distinctive features of Shetland, affording a delight that will never pass from memory. No doubt still grander effects may be obtained further north, more gorgeous colouring in the tropics: but there, joined to richness of vegetation, it will be a less marked feature, and Shetland need envy none of these. She may be satisfied with such bounties and beauties of nature as she possesses to overflowing.

I was fortunate in my visit to Shetland. G. possessed the best and fastest little boat in the island, and was skilful in managing her. Every sign of an approaching change he noted, and his good steering would take us sharply to a given point. He never missed his aim either, and the unlucky bird he singled out was doomed. He, too, loved to be out on the water, and there, wind and weather permitting, we spent all our time. Other boats and their freight would come in drenched from a chopping sea; we, almost always dry and comfortable. Thus we were independent of a boatman, and could sail out quietly by ourselves, and cruise about where fancy took us.

But there were times when a boatman was rather a necessity. If, for instance, we were going a longer or more difficult cruise than usual, and it seemed doubtful what the weather might turn out. Thus it was one morning when G. made up his mind to endeavour to get round to the cave of Bressay, and the cliffs of Noss, and if possible sail round the island, returning by the north entrance. It is difficult to do this in a small boat, unless you time yourself well to catch the turn of the tide, which runs round and between the islands with great rapidity. We ordered dinner for six o'clock, started about eleven, with a well-stocked luncheon basket, and took with us our friend Sandy, who, as usual, had with him his bottle of pure water.

It was a glorious morning. The sea was calm and transparent, the sky cloudless; we were bathed in sunshine. A warm breeze was blowing, sufficient to fill our sail and send us down the stream at a quick rate. We steered southwards, passed out at the entrance, its white lighthouse looking cool on the breezy height, and turned to the left. We sailed under a natural archway in the rocks, a feat only to be done in calm weather, and then with care, and came out again into the open sea and the hot sunshine.

It was a morning to revel in, I repeat. The tints of the sea were like the glowing of an opal, changing and shimmering with every passing moment. We were surrounded by sunbeams that flashed and sparkled upon the surface of the water. The land was locked in hazy repose. The birds in multitudes around us flew screaming about with their wild clang, chasing each other, disappearing into the water, and reappearing with their prey; altogether seeming to revel in the splendid weather. Nevertheless, there was a good deal

of swell upon the sea, which plashed against the base of the rocks with small commotion, as if to remind us that it had other and angrier moods at command.

Round here we were out of the wind, and our progress was slow. At length we came in front of the high cliffs of Bressay, and the entrance to the cave. It was not a very easy matter to get into it, on account of the swell, but more often than not it is impossible to attempt an entrance. Down went the sail, Sandy took up the oars, and at last we found ourselves within the cavern.

It was astonishing how rough and troublesome was the water in the interior, chopping about and tossing us up and down until it seemed that we should every moment be dashed against the sides and swamped. A splendid cave. I had never seen one so fine. At the entrance it expanded and went up in a vaulted roof. Immense stalactites hung from all parts. It might have served for the centre of some grand cathedral of nature. The noise of the restless water was so great and constant that only by shouting could we hear ourselves speak. Sandy, whose courage wanted reviving, took a hasty pull at his bottle of pure water. Then we lighted the torch and turned inwards. The effect was grand and weird. The flame of the torch, reflecting itself on all around, lighted up the darkness, gleamed upon the restless water, and flashed upon each face with unearthly glare. Turning to the right, the cave narrowed, and we entered a long aisle or passage in the rocks; went down so far that at length I began to think we had had enough of this subterraneous navigation.

The feeling was weird and sensational. The passage gradually narrowed, until at last it seemed that we must be jammed in between the rocks, and find ourselves buried in a living tomb. No man has ever reached the end of that mysterious passage. It is only possible to get so far that you see in the distance a small gleaming point that, shining like a star, seems to be a light issuing from another world. Perhaps it is so.

We, however, did not see this star. When our boat just grazed the sides of the cavern: a thrilling moment chosen by Sandy to drop the torch into the water and plunge us into appalling darkess: we felt that the moment for return had arrived. So, content to imagine the star, we pushed backwards, and in due course reached the entrance. It was a relief to behold daylight, and yet on no account would I have missed the visit.

As we were chopping about inside a boat came up to the entrance, containing three or four young men and as many maidens. We watched them turn into the passage, the torches lighting up their faces until they looked like visitants from some lower region; and then disappear in the windings of the cave. Their noisy laughter echoed and re-echoed and reverberated through the arches, and in and out of the nooks and crevices of the rock. Then G., who could

not withstand his opportunity for a bit of fun, took up his gun and discharged both barrels at once. The effect may be imagined. The loudest clap of thunder seemed melody in comparison. The sound went blasting and echoing along with terrific and multiplied report. As it gradually died away, we heard the shrieks of the young women following in quick succession; then a moment's silence; then peals of laughter from their companions, as, when the rocks did not fall upon them, they guessed what had caused the uproar. We afterwards heard that at the first instant they had made up their minds the day of judgment had come upon them.

I was not sorry to get out of the cave into the broad sea and the light. Almost it seemed like coming from death into life. We rested on our oars, and spent a quiet, lazy half hour over the luncheon basket, revelling in the sunshine and the water.

Then we continued our way onwards for some miles, until we reached the heights of Noss, and the wonderful holm that is separated from the island by a chasm or precipice of fearful depth. The sides are almost perpendicular, the space is sixty-five feet wide, and over this chasm at one time two ropes were swung, on which hung a wooden box or basket that served as a communication between the holm and the island: a species of aerial ferry. People would get into this box for the pleasure of the excitement, and be drawn to and fro. Only to look over in the passage at the immense depth beneath, the restless, angry water, the screaming birds that here built their nests, must have been enough to turn many a brain. It was called the Cradle of the Noss, and has very wisely been done away with.

Beyond this is the Noup of Noss, the most magnificent display of rock scenery it is possible to witness. It is flat, and almost perpendicular, honeycombed with the lapse of time, a home for countless multitudes of birds that in the month of June almost cover its surface; and it is nearly six hundred feet high. Nothing can exceed the grandeur and magnificence of this expanse of rock. The eye looks upwards, and the brain reels with the height; it measures the width from side to side, and staggers with the breadth. The mind is overpowered by so vast an extent. Yet down these precipices, sheerly perpendicular, after the eggs of the golden eagle that was wont to build its nest here, the Shetlanders have come at the risk of their lives. So sure-footed are they that many have returned safe and sound with their prizes, and some have gone down never to be seen again.

We had approached so near to the rocks that the sail had been lowered, and Sandy had taken the oars. Small rocks were jutting out in every direction, and the swell upon the water was causing a tempest amongst them. The boat chopped and tossed about like a tea-cup. Rounding a corner and entering a large bay, we caught sight, in the distance, of a Dutchman. A rowing-boat was putting

off to the ship from the shore with rapidity. There was no mistaking a smuggler. It was also easy to perceive that he had caught sight of us, and was concerned and anxious. He could not make us out. Why had we come round the corner so quietly? Why were we rowing and not sailing? Conscience makes cowards of us all, and the guilty conscience of the smuggler decided that we must be custom-house officers in search of prey. We were a long way off. With all possible dispatch his business was done with the little boat—or perhaps only half done—and he speedily put out to sea. The little boat went off like a flash into a difficult little creek running up into the land, thoroughly concealed by rocks that jutted out, the very place for smuggling caves and holes; and, their booty secured, out they came leisurely enough. We gradually made our

The Holm of Noss, Shetland.

way upwards towards the creek, and the boat as gradually went outwards, watching us the whole time, but keeping at a safe distance.

Sandy was particularly anxious to go up into the creek and explore the rocks and search for booty. A long pull of Schiedam was a resistless temptation to this water-drinker, and a pocketful of tobacco would have been a fitting accompaniment to the spirit. To say the truth, we, too, rather enjoyed the idea of exploring the rocks after booty, though, had we found it we should doubtless have been large-minded enough to leave it to its fate. The incident smacked of adventure, tame enough though it was, for the romantic days of smuggling are over. Therefore we shot in and made fast the boat, and got amongst the rocks and searched high and low, but the treasure was not unearthed. The men had done their work too well. A hiding-place it had perhaps taken them weeks or months to discover was not to be found in a few minutes. It was long

before Sandy abandoned the search, so anxious was he for the Schiedam and tobacco, but at length he, too, gave it up in despair. As we shot out we saw the boat on the watch, almost in the very same spot; but now they made off as fast as four oars would take them. The Dutchman was almost out of sight. The next morning, with an air of the greatest innocence, he entered Lerwick harbour.

It was so delicious in this sheltered bay that we paddled about and let down our fishing-lines. In this way we lost time, and were presently surprised to find it was growing late. We were far from home, and instead of going round and getting back by the north entrance we must return as we had come.

The wind was dropping; there was now hardly sufficient to fill the sail. It gradually ceased, and we found that we were drifting

THE FITFUL HEAD, SHETLAND.

backwards. We had ordered dinner for six o'clock: it was now nearly that hour; we were miles away, and the whole time we should have to row with a strong tide against us. Not a very pleasant prospect, but it had to be done; with the alternative of remaining all night upon the water.

Our progress was slow. The sun went down, the birds to roost. A flock of solon geese flew over our heads—to G.'s grief, who particularly wanted one of these birds, that are somewhat rare in Shetland: and who, having sprung his ramrod into the water, was unable to load his gun; whilst I, that day, had not taken out any gun at all. Then we fell into a shoal of whales. All round and about us, rolling, and rolling, and rolling, now their heads appearing and now their tails, the monsters were disporting. Had men and boats been at hand to turn them in shore and strand them, a grand harvest had been reaped. There must have been hundreds, nay,

thousands of them. Each one seemed capable of upsetting us easily with a lash of his tail, and then go rolling comfortably onwards, leaving us to splash about far less in our element than he. It was a curious sight to see them swimming in all directions far and near: to hear their breathing close to us; to see the water blown up into the air in spouts from their huge heads. These were the bottle-nosed whales. When the inhabitants can hear in time that a shoal is approaching their shores, they hurry out in boats, with all kinds of noisy instruments such as tin pots, pans, and kettles, and by their frightful noise terrify the unlucky whales on to the shore and then spear them. In a very short time they easily gain as much as £1,500 or £2,000. These small whales are, of course, a very different matter from the larger species.

Darkness came on, and from six o'clock until ten G. and I scarcely had the oars out of our hands, rowing the whole time against a strong current. Sandy was at the helm, and kept there, for we found that owing either to too many pulls at his pure water bottle, or to a certain native laziness, when he took an oar our progress was rather in a backward direction. At last we came in view of Bressay light. In time—it seemed a very long time—we passed it, and got round to the entrance of Lerwick harbour. A long row up and then we were in the Sound, opposite the few gleaming lights of the town: glad enough to take in the oars and set foot on land. We found our landlady bordering on a state of distraction: the more so that it was useless to set the crier to work on land with the big drum for two wanderers on the high seas. Worst calamity of all in her eyes, the dinner was spoilt. We, however, did not think so, until some half hour later. It had been a glorious day, memorable at least to one of us, to whom such an experience was not an every-day occurrence.

We were sailing about the harbour one night after dinner, enjoying the sunset and the colours in the sky, the calm water and the balmy air, in a dolce far niente kind of manner, just suited to a cigar and a cup of coffee—only that the coffee was absent. Twilight had lingered, the moon had risen in all her splendour behind Bressay, and was flooding the water with silvery light as darkness gathered. She was full and round as a shield: we had remarked upon it. Suddenly, looking up, we saw that the moon was no longer full. For a few moments it was a mystery; and then, as the shadow increased, we saw that it was the commencement of an eclipse. It gradually became total. It would be difficult to forget the appearance of the sky that night in these northern latitudes. The almost dazzling brightness of the moon; the shadow gradually veiling the planet like some mysterious monster about to shut her out for ever. Then, when the eclipse was total, the dark, blood-red ball that glowered down upon us almost like an evil eye. They seemed to have increased in size and number, whilst Mars appeared three

times as large and luminous as on ordinary occasions: almost a second small moon. The beauty of the "starry sky" was indescribable. During the time of total eclipse it almost seemed as if nature had suspended her course, and laws were about to change. The going off of the eclipse, when the blood-red spot disappeared and gave place to the small silver crescent, was the most beautiful of all. Gradually the last shadow swept away, and one heaved a sigh of relief at "the restoration of all things." By the full light I took out a small letter, cramped and indistinct in the handwriting, and read it almost as easily as by daylight.

Once more the next morning rose bright and glorious. We took our boat, this time without Sandy, and sailed out in the opposite direction, through the north entrance. The coast here is almost more broken and diversified than on the opposite side, and gives you quite a different impression. It is also more dangerous sailing in shore, for there are more hidden rocks to strike the unwary, which may keep you there for hours, and sometimes smash you up altogether.

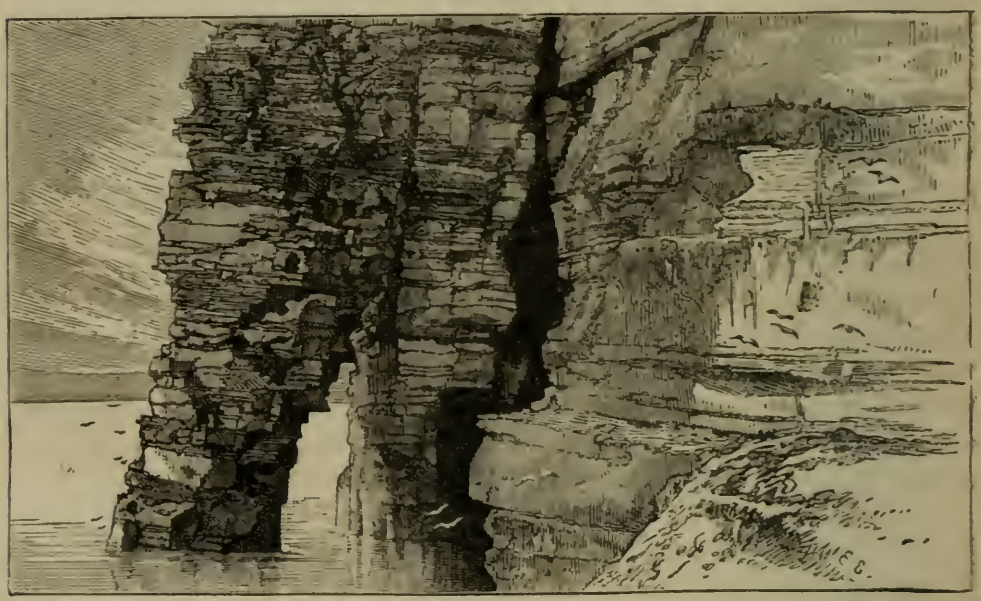
This morning the sea was calm, yet not without the swell that is seldom absent. We drifted through the entrance with wind and tide at great speed, losing sight of Lerwick as we turned northwards, nothing before us but the magnificent sea, and on either side the land with its broken edges. All the gorgeous colours of yesterday were repeated: more perceptible here than on the south side, for the land shelves more directly down to the water, and is greener and more smiling. Going round for some distance, we ran our boat with some difficulty into a small creek formed by the rocks, scrambled over their slippery surface, and so on to the island.

So solitary was the island, and deserted, we might have been two Robinson Crusoes cast ashore upon some unknown portion of the globe, with nothing but our guns to trust to for food and defence. No trace of footstep; no sign of hut or cabin; no vestige of man. Nothing but "eternal silence and solitude." G. went round a distance of some two hundred yards to discover if there was any sport to be had. In a few moments I heard the report of his gun, followed almost immediately by his reappearance, prize in hand —a couple of curlew. It is difficult to shoot one of these shy birds: still rarer to bring down two at once. Others flew off with their peculiar and melancholy, almost human cry.

The report of the gun had startled more than the air. Large flocks of gulls rose whirling and screaming above our heads, far out of shot, some of them soaring away round to the Noup of Ness. Many of the birds were magnificent creatures, of the large black-backed species, looking, as they hung in the air, almost like young eagles. One imprudently flew within range. We were on the look-out for him, and down he came into the water, his last flight taken. A scorie, his feathers yet grey and tender, but a splendid bird, the size of a small goose: a prize worth having, though not for

the same reason as the curlew. They are delicious eating ; this bird was worth mounting.

We drew him into the boat, and for the next two hours, whilst we were cruising about, one of the old birds hung over us with melancholy cry, wondering what had come to the young one that he could see lying in the side of the boat. He, with his white breast and grand black wings, would have been a greater prize; but he took care to keep out of danger, and at last, with a final and most despairing whirl and cry, as near to us as he dared venture, he flew away to his disconsolate mate. Had we known, should we have had the heart to shoot the young one? I cannot tell. I only know that he is not far off as I write, in company with other silent companions : that every time I look at him I once more see the bright-



BRESSAY, SHETLAND.

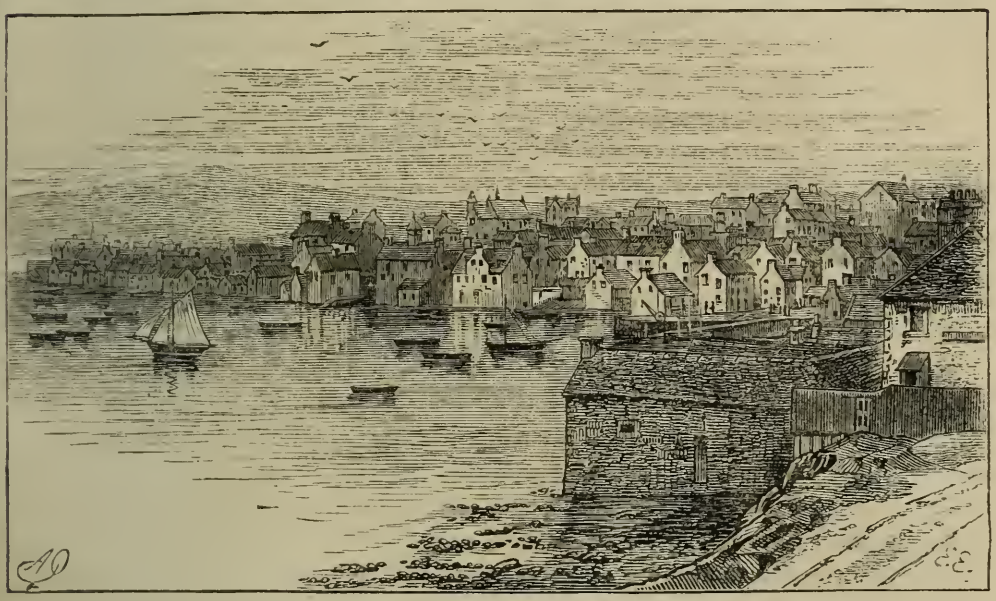
ness of that day, the glow of rich colouring on sea and land that remains like a vision of glory; I feel the freshness of the Shetland breezes : and think the bird was not shot quite in vain.

We had also shot a puffin, a kittiwake, a sheldrake, a young cormorant, and a black guillemot, or tystie, as the Shetlanders call them. All were in excellent condition, and decidedly worth mounting. That night, therefore, we packed them in a box with plenty of camphor, and sent them off by the next day's steamer to Granton, thence to London, to Burton, of Wardour Street. They reached him in perfect condition, and without a feather out of place. He did justice to the beautiful birds, and mounted them with his usual taste and skill.

Thus passed my days in Shetland. Out on the water, shooting, fishing, sailing, enjoying the fresh, invigorating air, the freedom of the sea, the grandeur and boldness of the rocks, around which we

would hover day after day with a fascination that never lost its charm. Many a day, it is true, we were weatherbound: rough seas and strong winds kept us from the water, the haunts of the wild birds, the caves, and the skerries. No landing on distant parts of the shore, with nothing to see but the eternal beauty of sky and water and earth blending together in gorgeous colouring that seemed to wrap and enfold you, and become absorbed in your very existence, making you feel an inhabitant of some better, fairer, and freer world.

But on these days other resources were forthcoming. Tramping over hill and dale, gun in hand, the very wind that kept you from putting out to sea blowing upon you here with invigorating force; stirring up the heather, joining its rush to the booming and roaring



LERWICK.

of the sea, which came to you from the top of every hill, or when scaling the edge of the cliffs. Rarely, indeed, were we kept prisoners in the house, unless the rain came down with such determination to have its own way that it had it. And even then there was always the possibility that it might be over in an hour, and give place to blue skies, so changing as the caprices of a spoilt beauty are the moods of this Shetland climate. It was altogether a delicious experience never to be forgotten.

The very morning of the day that I was to leave Shetland the water was rough, the wind boisterous, and sharp showers fell at intervals. But being my last day, G. was determined to go out for a final sail, if possible. So out we went, and found it rougher than we had expected: too great a risk to venture into the open sea. Therefore we turned aside to the right, into the bay that runs up into the land, and went in amongst the rocks. G. had made up

his mind to get a rock pigeon or two, and this was only to be done by running in shore. The sea was rough and chopping, and promised no great treat for that night's passage. We had great difficulty to keep clear of the rocks jutting out into the water, familiar contact with which would have been certain destruction on such a morning. In front of one of the caves we gave a shot to startle the pigeons. Out flew half a score of the beautiful little birds, but half a score never flew in again. G., anxious to secure his prize, forgot the boat, which proceeded to take matters into its own hands, and quietly landed us hard and fast upon a flat rock just under the water.

The situation was not without danger. We might very possibly be dashed to pieces. The water was lashing itself into small furies on all sides. We struggled and toiled to release ourselves: got out of the boat and on to the surrounding rocks; but the boat would not budge an inch. I began to think there was small chance of taking passage "southwards" that night. At six o'clock the steamer would puff out, and from our vantage-ground we should have the pleasure of watching her progress: supposing we were still above the water and not below it. But at length a lucky swell raised the boat a little, and with a well-timed push, away she went, whilst we scrambled in the best way we could. Free once more, but the pigeons were lost: dashed up by the waves amongst the rocks. There was no venturing a second time into danger.

I returned in time to pack up, reluctant enough to do so. The old boatman, who had brought me on shore, in like manner took me back to the steamer. Once more the flit-boats were crowding about her like locusts. The last of all to come up was the Government boat with the mail-bags. They were taken on board, the bell rang, the anchor was weighed, and we steamed towards the south entrance. One familiar rock and point after another was rapidly passed, and we were soon on the broad sea. Land was to our right, one bold headland standing out beyond another. Presently we passed through the narrow waters between the little island of Mousa and the mainland. For a moment it looked as if we were running into the shore: but the way soon opened up as we left behind us on the one side the ruins of the burgh, on the other the tall chimneys of the ironworks. Then came the grand, solemn cliffs of the Fitful head, partially concealed by the mainland which interposed between them: and last of all the bold rocks of Sumburgh, crowned by the lighthouse that now flashed out its beacon.

It grew dark very soon. About three in the morning we reached Kirkwall, where I bade a by no means reluctant farewell to the boat. I had retained a lively recollection of the passage from Aberdeen to Kirkwall, and the very small amount of trouble taken to insure the comfort of the passengers: and had mentally registered a vow not to return the same way. The next morning I went over

to Stromness. There I spent the afternoon and the night, and left the following morning at seven o'clock in the mail boat. The cliffs of Hoy and the rocky coast looked tame and dwarfed in comparison with the cliffs of Shetland. Yet it must be remembered that a rocky coast, to be enjoyed to perfection, must be seen when you are immediately beneath it in a small boat: not when passing in a steamer at some little distance. Before nine o'clock, after a frightful roll, we reached Thurso. Here, after a bath and breakfast in the chief hotel of the place—of which the name has escaped me, but which appeared as comfortable as its charges were moderate—I took train and came down through Scotland.

Thus ended a most pleasant visit to these northern latitudes. I trust I have not exaggerated the pleasures and attractions of Shetland, or raised hopes or impressions in any reader's mind that a personal acquaintance might diminish or destroy. I have distinctly said that he who goes to Shetland must be prepared to rough it to a great extent. Lodgings are of the humblest description, and few in number. The town of Lerwick is in itself ugly, rough, and destitute of every possible attraction. I can thoroughly conceive that some persons may go to Shetland and think it the most dismal and uninteresting spot on the face of the earth, without a single redeeming feature.

But he who loves nature and colouring; who can revel in rocks, in boating, in tramping over moors; in fishing, either on the sea or in the lakes; who loves fresh, pure air, and to get away from a crowd into something like repose: will find all this in Shetland to perfection, and to his heart's content. It is a good thing to go up with a companion rather than alone: better still to possess a friend on the spot, for this will very much alter the aspect of things. I doubt not that one half the charms of Shetland would have been missing but for my friend G., who, living up there, possessed everything ready to hand that could possibly be wanted; who knew every inch of the ground; who had the best and fastest little boat in the place; and whose inclination, just as much as mine, led him to be for ever on the water. Under such given conditions Shetland will yield you glorious days at the moment, and many pleasant memories in the future: and will lay up in store a stock of health that will enable you, if needs must, to relight the midnight oil, and burn the candle at both ends. A fatal habit, dear reader, that I trust enters not into your experience.

THE END.

MARIE DE VALOIS.

IT was a wild October night in the year 1477. Wind and rain were holding high carnival in the streets of the ancient town of Ghent. The rich and luxurious citizens kept closely within doors. The streets were almost deserted. Here and there a late wayfarer hurried along closely wrapped in cloak and hood, or a man-at-arms in leather jerkin and steel cuirass tramped by, or half a dozen retainers of some great dignitary clattered along, their torches sputtering and hissing in the rain, their voices drowned by the roaring of the wind.

The storm was at its height when a traveller passed down the principal street. He was heavily armed, and mounted on a strong black charger, and both he and his horse bore signs of a long conflict with wind and weather. He scanned all the houses narrowly as he passed along, apparently in search of some place of refuge for the night. Singling out a large and stately building somewhat apart from the rest, he stopped before a ponderous iron-studded door, opening under an archway crowned with turrets, and having strongly fortified towers on either side. Here he knocked loud and long, but for some minutes in vain. At length a grated wicket in the door was pushed aside, and a gruff voice asked, in no very amiable accents, "Who are you? What do you want at this hour of the night? and whence do you come?"

"A pretty string of questions to answer in a breath," retorted the traveller, impatiently. "Let me in, man; this is not the place to stand parleying of what concerns thee not."

"Nevertheless, you do not enter without answering," returned the surly janitor, and he made a motion as if to close the wicket.

"I marvel that your wisdom must needs ask me such questions," was the slightly sarcastic answer, "when I might, an it pleased me, answer each one with a lie. Who I am ——"

"Are you alone?" interrupted the warder, peering suspiciously out into the darkness.

"As you may see, an you would but use your eyes."

"Aye," rejoined the other, "and by the same token, if you would but use yours you may discover a pent-house a yard or two to the left, which will shelter you till I have reported your arrival and have authority to admit you."

"Report it, then, in heaven's name, and be quick about it," retorted the traveller, impatiently. "Tut, man, for what do you take me? A knight errant come to storm your city and carry off your fair young duchess? By my faith, the task were a mighty exploit, for if report speaks true ye keep her in watch and ward like a prisoner."

"By what name shall I announce you?" asked the warder, paying no heed to the remarks.

"Max Theurdank, a knight of Thuringia," returned the traveller. And with a muttered malediction on the janitor's pertinacity he led his horse to the shelter of the pent-house to await the result of his application.

The warder crossed a spacious court-yard and entered a large vaulted hall filled with servants and retainers. Here he sought out a grave and dignified personage, whose black gown and wand of office betokened him a sort of majordomo or steward: and after a few words of explanation was conducted by him through several wide corridors and ante-chambers towards a suite of rooms much superior to the rest in internal decorations.

The principal apartment was a large lofty room hung with tapestry richly embroidered, the ceiling exquisitely carved in delicate fret-work, the furniture of ebony inlaid with silver, and a carpet—then a rare luxury—covering part of the floor. A blazing fire burnt on the marble hearth. Perfumed candles, in massive silver candelabra, were disposed about the room. Near the fire stood an embroidery frame, with a heap of coloured silks. An emblazoned missal, in a carved ivory cover, lay on the table, together with a gold casket of rare jeweller's work, and some tall vases of Venetian glass.

A young lady was seated on a carved settee near the fire. She was a beautiful girl, with a bright spirited face, golden hair, deep-fringed blue eyes, and a complexion exquisitely fair and transparent. Every turn of her stately head, every motion of her rounded arms and small white hands, every movement of her slight tall figure, was full of grace, and a sort of gentle unconscious dignity, as of one whose slightest wish was a command. Her dress was of white silk, embroidered with seed pearls, and fitting tight to the shape; over this was a loose robe of black velvet, edged with bands of soft white fur. Her hair was drawn away from the temples and fell over her shoulders according to the fashion of the time; it was partly hidden by a bourlet, a curiously shaped cap, terminating in a high point behind, to which a long thin veil was attached, which reached to the ground. Round her neck was a jewelled collar blazing with gems, from which depended the most noble order of the Golden Fleece. For the fair, graceful girl, with the arch face and sweet eyes, was Marie de Valois, Duchess of Burgundy, Countess of Flanders, Artois, and Hainault, Sovereign Lady of a hundred free cities, and owner of half a dozen counties: the most charming woman and the greatest heiress in Europe.

The young duchess was gazing into the glowing fire, an expression of intense sadness and perplexity on her expressive face. Truth to tell, notwithstanding her beauty, her high birth, and her immense wealth, her position at this moment was one of no little trouble and anxiety.

On the death of her father, Charles the Bold, nine months before, she had found herself sovereign of one of the richest and most influential kingdoms of Europe; the head of a tumultuous council whose primary consideration was their own interests; a turbulent populace, ever on the watch for rebellion; and a powerful enemy in the person of King Louis XI., anxiously awaiting the first shadow of an excuse to pounce down upon her and her possessions.

In an evil moment, Marie—by the advice of her step-mother, Margaret of York, and her Chancellors, De Hugonet and D'Himbercourt—had entered into a secret negotiation with Louis, having for its object her own marriage with the Dauphin. This negotiation being divulged by the crafty monarch, for the express purpose of embroiling the young duchess with her own subjects, excited the anger of the citizens of Ghent, Liège, and Bruges into furious heat. They openly revolted against her authority, upbraided and insulted her in public assembly, and condemned her advisers, De Hugonet and D'Himbercourt, to death, giving them only three hours to prepare for it.

The poor young duchess was in the deepest affliction at the impending fate of her faithful servants. Distracted with anxiety she left her abode, and hurrying to the Hôtel de Ville, appealed, with streaming eyes, to the chief magistrate. He coldly told her that the condemned men were traitors, and must suffer their just doom. Even while she pleaded for them, the prisoners were led forth for execution. Marie rushed into the street again, her hair dishevelled, her face pale, and tears streaming down her cheeks. She hurried along, her eyes fixed on the scaffold, her clasped hands lifted towards the executioners. The fierce crowd made way for her with sullen looks and low menacing words. At last she reached the foot of the scaffold, and sprang up the steps to make one last appeal to the sympathy of the crowd. But too late. Even as she appeared the signal was given, the axes fell, and the blood of her faithful servants covered her robe as she sank senseless beside the blocks. Since then, Marie had been kept by her fierce subjects in a state of semi-captivity, her liberty curtailed, her household retinue dismissed, and her personal attendants limited to a single page and a young French lady, Jacqueline de Brienne, both of whom the astute Council of Ghent considered too young and too frivolous to be of any danger to their interests.

At the opening of the door Marie roused herself, and turned an inquiring glance at the grave and severe face of the majordomo and his surly companion.

"Ah! our greatly esteemed lord of the chambers, and our trusty seneschal," she said, half scornfully; and, turning to the latter, "Well, sir warder, to what are we indebted for a sight of your iron visage at this hour of the evening?"

The man briefly stated his errand.

"Theurdank, a knight of Thuringia," said Marie, slowly; "I know not his name. Whose banner doth he follow?"

"It was too dark to see," said the man, surlily.

"And you could not ask, I suppose. One might as well have an owl or a bat for a janitor," said Marie, impatiently. "Admit him at once. I marvel you should deem it necessary to ask my permission."

"May I be allowed to remind your Highness," began the major-domo, "that the commands of the council are strict that no one should be admitted save by an order from them."

"Am I to be controlled and thwarted by my own council in every insignificant thing?" cried Marie, indignantly. "Admit him, I say, without delay."

"Madam, it may be dangerous," interposed Mademoiselle de Brienne. "Remember our position. Would it not be well at least to consult ——"

"I will consult no one," cried Marie, impetuously. "What! Can I not bestow a night's hospitality on a chance traveller without, forsooth, craving permission from Messieurs les Bourgeois de Ghent. Methinks, Jacqueline, the advent of a gallant knight might be a welcome relief to the monotony thou hast endured all these weary weeks. Perchance he may tell us something of the gallant Maximilian and his wars. I long to hear a tale of doughty deeds once more."

"You will not, surely, admit him to an audience," interposed Mademoiselle de Brienne, in a tone of remonstrance. "Oh, madam, the council, bethink you ——"

"I care not for the council," interrupted the young duchess. "Friendless and orphan as I am, I am still mistress here, and will render account of my actions to no one; least of all to the low-born and insolent burghers who have dared to insult me even to my face. Admit the stranger, sir steward, and see that he has needful refreshment. Then send Alberic to guide him to this room, where it is our pleasure to receive him."

The steward ventured no further remonstrance, but with a low reverence quitted the room. As the door closed Marie rose and began to pace the room, the flush of indignant anger still on her face. "Ah, Jacqueline," she cried, "you preach prudence to deaf ears. Prudence! Have I not guarded every word I spoke, aye, every tone of my voice, till my very throat ached for liberty? Have I not submitted and humbled myself till my soul burnt within me? And what is the result?"

She stopped a moment, her bosom swelling, her beautiful eyes filling with tears, then continued, in a choking voice: "The result is that I, the daughter of the most generous prince in Europe, cannot offer a night's shelter to a traveller without being called to account by my own menials, and threatened with the vengeance of an assembly of upstart burghers. Preach to me no more of prudence, Jacqueline. I'll none of it."

"Ah, madam," said Jacqueline, sadly, "without it we are lost.

Remember De Hugonet, the brave, the chivalrous. Remember D'Himbercourt the loyal, the wise ——"

"Remember!" cried Marie, with trembling lips and blanching face; "do I ever forget that they died for me? Do I ever forget that all my tears and entreaties could not win their lives? Shall I ever lose sight of that mob of cruel faces, those ranks of stern soldiers, the platform draped in black, the blocks, the executioners ——"

Marie broke off abruptly, and sank into a seat in an agony of distress, shuddering all over her slight frame.

"Jacqueline," she cried at last, as she pushed back the hair from her tear-stained face, "if all who love me must die for me, I had better never have been born. But," raising her head with a proud gesture, "let them beware, those cruel, merciless men. The time may come when Marie de Valois will have power as well as justice on her side; then let them look to themselves."

She paused awhile in deep thought, gazing with unseeing eyes into the red glow of the fire. Presently she roused herself, and said with a half-sigh, "Come, Jacqueline, it will never do to greet our guest with these melancholy faces. Who knows but he may be some knight errant from the court of Maximilian, who will bestir himself to succour two distressed damsels? Hush, here they come," she added, warningly. As she spoke the door was thrown open, and, preceded by a page, the benighted traveller was ushered, with some degree of ceremony, into the room.

He was a man apparently about twenty-three years of age, with strongly-marked features, remarkable for their expression of power and intellect; his eyes were dark blue, keen and piercing, his hair, light brown in colour, was worn long and slightly curled in the fashion of the time. He was very tall, with a stately dignity and grace of bearing savouring more of courts and camps than the simple knight he professed himself. He had thrown aside his armour, and now appeared in a rich dress of dark brown velvet, sewn with gold, and having a short cloak of the same, lined with costly fur; a light velvet cap, with a border of the same fur, and a chain and clasp of gold confining a heron's plume, was in his hand.

There was a slight degree of lameness in his gait, which he accounted for by stating that in riding through the Forest of Ardennes he had struck his foot against the trunk of a tree. He advanced towards Marie, and with graceful though somewhat grave courtesy, thanked her for the shelter she had so hospitably afforded him.

"You are welcome, fair sir," said Marie, motioning him to a seat with a gracious smile. "We would ever thank the good fortune that gives us once more the company of a knight from Thuringia, the country of the gallant Maximilian. Are you one of his brave captains yourself?"

The stranger's dark eyes gleamed as he bowed low, and a slight flush rose above the brown of his face.

"I have served under his banner," he replied, briefly.

"Then you can tell us if all the wild tales of his daring and desperate chivalry be true," cried Marie, enthusiastically. "Tell me, fair sir, is he the one to do and dare, where, perchance, neither honour nor glory would be the guerdon?"

"He would do and dare everything for thee, lady," was the reply, with an eloquent glance.

"Say'st thou so? I would I could put him to the test, for never mortal woman wanted aid as I do now. Sir knight, recount us some tale of the gallant deeds of this warrior prince."

Thus commanded, the knight proceeded—with an air of diffidence which the high birth and beauty of his fair entertainer might well impose upon him—to narrate some of the less known of the stirring events of those wild and warlike times. As he continued, his face kindled, his eyes flashed, his fine figure seemed instinct with power, and he spoke with an ease and facility which only intimate and personal knowledge could give, unconsciously betraying, at the same time, with all his military frankness, the easy and graceful dignity of one conscious of gentle birth, and accustomed to mix on equal terms with the great and noble.

The two ladies listened entranced. Marie, a true daughter of her warrior father, with flushing cheeks and sparkling eyes, scarcely moving her face from his; Jacqueline leaning over her mistress's high-backed chair, not a whit less fascinated.

When the time came for the stranger to take leave for the night, it seemed but as if a few minutes had passed, so strongly had his warlike tales of splendid tilts and tournaments, and sterner fights and battles, enchained their interest and attention.

"Ah!" sighed Marie as the door closed upon him. "Had I but a few hundred of the loyal hearts and true he discourses so gallantly about, I would not remain an hour in this base city. I warrant the Archduke had few braver or better soldiers than he in his whole army."

"Or handsomer men," said Mademoiselle de Brienne with an arch glance at her mistress. "I would any one of the dozen suitors for your Highness's hand were as well favoured as he."

The next morning it was discovered that the accident the knight had met with in the forest had proved more serious than was at first apprehended. His ancle had become so swollen in the course of the night that there was not the least chance of his being able to put his foot in the stirrup for some days.

Even Marie, though she professed to rejoice at an accident which promised a more intimate acquaintance with the agreeable stranger, could not shut her eyes to the embarrassment and trouble which his prolonged sojourn might bring upon her. The Council of Ghent were irritably suspicious of the most innocent action on the part of their young duchess. The most trivial events in her household were

reported to them: and such an incident as the presence for some days of a stranger knight by Marie's express command, might be construed as boding secret plans of escape or retaliation, which they would suppress with a strong hand.

And so the event proved. For three or four days nothing occurred to vary the usual monotony of Marie's semi-captivity. The lame knight kept that wing of the palace which had been assigned to him during the daytime; but as soon as evening came he invariably despatched the page Alberic to the apartments of the young duchess, craving an audience, which Marie granted with rather more than her usual graciousness.

On the morning of the fifth day a deputation came from the council, and, demanding an interview with Marie, informed her, on some frivolous pretext of public safety and her own defenceless state, that the stranger knight must be dismissed: at the same time giving her to understand, in case of refusal, that their commands would be enforced by their own men-at-arms.

All Marie's spirit fired up at this indignity, and she remonstrated with no little warmth on the unjustness and inhospitality of such a proceeding. But her remonstrances were met by a significant threat that henceforth her house would be most strictly watched, and she herself not suffered to go beyond its walls.

At this menace Marie drew up her slight figure haughtily, and turning to the deputation with flashing eyes, she said, in a tone of sarcastic bitterness, "I had not thought ye were so careful of my welfare, messieurs. In good sooth, a few days' hospitality offered to a lame traveller is somewhat alarming, and doubtless, as ye say, perilous to my safety and the peace of mind of my loyal subjects of Ghent. Nevertheless, I tell you it was my pleasure to admit the knight into my house, and by my pleasure he shall stay." And with a glance of haughty contempt at the deputies, the indignant young duchess swept from the room.

But though Marie carried it so bravely before her unruly subjects, it was with a beating heart she sought the solitude of her own room, and in no little consternation began to reflect that her high-spirited resolution might cost her dear.

Fortunately it was not put to the test. A chance inquiry for the stranger knight led to the discovery that he had disappeared, having departed secretly without warning or leave-taking to anyone. Marie expressed herself not a little surprised at his want of courtesy, while Mademoiselle de Brienne spent rather more than half an hour in bewailing the ingratitude of mankind in general and Herr Max Theurdank in particular.

The words of the council had been no empty threat. Within two hours of the departure of the deputies, Jacqueline was informed that henceforth she and her mistress must confine themselves to the suite of rooms generally appropriated to Marie: and that wilful young

lady, essaying to pass beyond the allotted boundaries, found herself held at bay by an armed sentinel on duty in the wide corridor, and also made the unpleasant discovery that the sentries had been doubled all round the palace, and in the court-yard a large band of the city guard were on duty.

Indignation at the treatment she experienced enabled Marie to pass the first two days of her captivity without suffering from ennui, but the third appeared insupportably tedious, and the fourth well-nigh unbearable. Towards evening she took up her station at the large window of the apartment, seeking to beguile the weary hours by watching the scene without.

It was one of those large square windows—almost a room in itself—so common in the old Flemish houses, projecting over the street, and supported by buttresses and stonework elaborately carved. Exactly opposite was the forge of an armourer, the fire from which spread a strong illumination all around; showers of sparks flew out as the heavy hammer resounded on the anvil, swarthy figures moved about in the red light. The pavement was strewn with armour; the bright cuirass and polished helmet gleamed in the lurid glow of the furnace.

The figures of the armourer and his satellites shone in high relief. While idly watching the motions of these busy artisans, the two prisoners could not avoid being struck by the superiority of one man over all the others. Unconsciously at first, but soon with absorbing interest, they watched the motions of this individual.

He had a fine, well-proportioned figure, athletic and agile. An enormous beard and moustache so covered his features that scarcely any could be seen, and his skin was begrimed by his trade to the hue of a mulatto. There was an easy grace and symmetry in his movements not usual in one of his position. As it grew dark the forge became quite deserted. One by one the labourers disappeared, till only the master and his assistant remained.

Presently he looked up and scanned the window opposite with eager attention. Perceiving the two ladies at the lattice, he made a sign to arrest their attention, and, leaving the forge, came forward into the comparative darkness underneath the projecting window. A moment after they heard a light tap on the glass. Half curious, half frightened, Marie signed to Jacqueline to open it. The long steel lance was gently pushed in; attached to the point by a blue ribbon was a small bunch of marigolds. Jacqueline unfastened the flowers, thrust the lance back again, and hastily closed the window.

"Oh, madam, it is a friend," she exclaimed. "See, your own flowers, and here is a scroll of writing bound round them."

With trembling fingers Marie unfastened the floss silk that secured the paper, and opening the scroll read these words, addressed to herself in the French language :—

"LADY,—Farewell! Thanks for thy courtesy. I know the state of perplexity and imprisonment in which thou art placed. If thy distress and peril increase, and thou wouldst have aid from without, place the marigolds in thy bosom in the morning, and before the western sun hath gilded the golden dragon on the belfry of Notre Dame I will be with thee. In token of assent drop two of the flowers tied with ribbon from the lattice.

"THEURDANK."

"'Tis the stranger knight himself," cried Marie, impetuously. "Read, Jacqueline!" and she passed the missive on to her attendant. "What think you now?"

"That the Thuringian knight grows more mysterious and interesting every day," returned Mademoiselle de Brienne, demurely, noting her young mistress's sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks with some curiosity. "Not that his single arm would avail much against the whole power of the legions of Ghent; nevertheless ——"

"Hush, girl; what matters it? I tell thee, Jacqueline, one friend outside the walls of this detestable city brings me more hope than a hundred of my most loyal lieges within. Quick, girl, tie the flowers as he bids, and fling them out. I well-nigh hope we may have occasion to try him."

Jacqueline singled two marigolds from the bunch, and fastening them securely with the ribbon, opened the casement and flung them into the street below. The tall figure of the disguised knight was pacing slowly up and down, humming a verse of one of the martial airs so common in the dominions of the warlike Duke of Burgundy.

He looked round as the window opened, and taking off his cap picked up the marigolds and fastened them in the brim. Then with a courtly bow and wave of his hand he crossed the street and passed into the interior of the forge.

Marie's captivity had lasted a week, when one morning she received a summons to attend a meeting of the council at the Hôtel de Ville. Outwardly treated with all honour and respect, escorted by a large body of men-at-arms, and with much show of magnificence, she made her appearance before her rebellious subjects.

She was attired plainly in black velvet, slashed with white satin, with a long gauze veil floating from her fair head, her bright golden hair hanging over her shoulders, and with no ornament save a single row of priceless pearls. With a graceful inclination of her head she entered the council-room and took her seat under the purple canopy of the chair of state, while Mademoiselle de Brienne and her pages of honour retired a little behind it.

There was a slight pause. Then the syndic rose in his place, and in a long speech acquainted Marie with the nature of the business which she had been summoned to hear

It seemed that her refractory subjects, as a climax to their

tyranny, had taken upon themselves to choose a husband for her; alleging as their motive—what really had a foundation in truth—that among all those who had sought her hand Marie had never deigned to show favour to any. They had therefore taken the matter into their own hands, fixed upon the bridegroom, and now sent for their liege lady to inform her of their decision.

There were at that moment several aspirants to the hand of Marie de Valois, the most prominent the Prince de Clèves and the Duc de Gueldres; the first an exceedingly handsome young man, but deficient in intellect; the second a man of middle age, a monster of cruelty, even in that lawless time, and at this moment in prison at Courtrai for the murder of his own father. It was this man upon whom the astute Council of Ghent had fixed as a fitting husband for their beautiful young duchess.

Marie's heart sank with agony and dismay on hearing this cruel and unfeeling scheme. Her grief and indignation knew no bounds. She well knew the terrible violence and obstinacy of these proud burghers, and shuddered to think they would not hesitate to drag her to the altar, with one of the most wicked and detestable of men, if it served their purpose.

Summoning all her courage, while her blanched cheeks and trembling lips showed how great was her fear, she said, "Surely, messieurs, you do not counsel me to anything so monstrous. The Duc de Gueldres is no fitting match for Marie de Valois! Bethink you of his age, his horrible crimes. It is not possible I can entertain the idea of such an alliance. I pray you do not press it upon me."

She was answered by a long harangue on the policy that made the union desirable. The Duc de Gueldres was a brave soldier if a bad man, and his authority would curb the dissensions of the kingdom. The council had resolved upon it, and had already sent an embassy to Courtrai to release the prisoner and conduct him with all honour to Ghent.

"Surely ye would not compel me to marry against my will?" exclaimed Marie, in a tone of horror, as she glanced appealingly round the assembly for one friendly face. "Surely ye who have daughters of your own do not join in this iniquitous scheme. By your love for them I beseech you to think better of it!" she went on imploringly, her beautiful eyes filling with tears, and her heart sinking at the threatening glances. "Ah, messieurs, had my brave father been alive ye had not ventured even to name that wicked and unscrupulous man to me."

It was an unfortunate speech, recalling as it did to the minds of the council the somewhat arbitrary, and not always over just dealings of Charles the Bold with his turbulent subjects of Ghent. The poor young duchess was assailed with a storm of upbraidings and insolent menaces. All the spirit of Marie's martial ancestors flashed into fire at these threats. For some minutes she sat in silent scorn, her bosom

swelling with indignation, her fair face flushing. At length, rising in her seat, she waved her hand for silence, and with her slight figure drawn up, and her stately head raised, she cried, in defiant tones, "I scorn your threats, and hold ye in contempt. Helpless and alone as I am, I defy you. I tell you that, sooner than become the bride of the ruffian Duc de Gueldres, I will ally myself to the very lowest and meanest in the city—aye, even the very armourer that works beneath my window. Come, Jacqueline, this discussion beseems me not; we will retire." And with flashing eyes, and a glance of haughty displeasure round the assembly, the young duchess quitted the room.

But though she carried herself so bravely before the council, when Marie once more reached her own apartments she threw herself on her couch in despair, and gave way to the tears which pride had repressed in their presence. Evening came and found the poor young duchess with throbbing pulses and heated, tear-stained face, as undecided as ever, only firm in one thing, that death itself were preferable to a marriage with the Duc de Gueldres.

The next day passed in much the same manner—in forming plans one minute to be rejected the next—in alternate fits of indignation and despair—in vain schemes of flight and rescue.

In the evening a message was sent to Marie that the Duc de Gueldres was liberated from Courtrai, and at the head of a large body of followers would shortly appear in Ghent; and a command was given that the duchess would hold herself in readiness to give him a reception befitting his position as her intended bridegroom.

With unutterable horror Marie heard this cruel command. Her agony of distress was pitiable to see. Humbling herself, she sent message after message to the inexorable council, pleading with all her soul against such unnecessary and indecorous haste; but with no avail, not even a delay of three days would they grant; and, at last, so tyrannical grew their replies that even in her sore peril and distress she scorned to plead any more.

Outraged and indignant the poor young duchess passed a sleepless night, and rose in the morning with haggard cheeks and weary eyes.

"Jacqueline," she said, with a sad smile, "it may be weak and credulous, it may avail nothing, but it is at least a chance. Give me the marigolds; I will prove if the stranger knight hath, indeed, the power to help one whom even heaven itself seems to have abandoned."

"I would stake my honour on the knight's good faith," said Jacqueline, as she took the flowers from the vase in which they had been placed.

"Would you," said Marie, dreamily, as she fastened them in the bosom of her dress; "I doubt not his truth, but, alas! what can one man do against the whole city of Ghent?"

The day wore on, evening approached, and then with every moment fled a portion of the hope—vague it is true—which sus-

tained her. To add to her distress another message came from the council expressive of their expectation that all was prepared for the betrothal ceremony on the morrow.

With straining eyes Marie stationed herself at the window, and watched the sun as it crept lower and lower in the west, the long beams resting in crimson radiance on the delicate tracery and fret-work of the spire of Notre Dame. The last shaft of light rested on the famed golden dragon, quivered, and vanished, and the grey twilight crept over the city.

Marie turned from the casement, her last hope gone.

"Oh, Jacqueline," she cried, bursting into a passion of tears, "I am lost, lost, abandoned by heaven and by man."

"Hush, madam, oh, hush!" cried Jacqueline, as she strove to soothe the hysterical weeping by caresses and gentle words.

Suddenly a wild clamour broke out in the street below, cries and screams, mingled with hoarse shouts of command. Jacqueline rushed to the window, threw it open, and leant out. The street was filled with a tumultuous crowd, tossing and swaying hither and thither, torches blazed and flickered, swords were drawn, and spears glinted in the waning light; cries of "Treason! treason!" "The duke! the duke!" "Cut him down!" mingled with wild hurrahs of delight, rose in the air; while the crowd surged to and fro, pressing now up, now down, the street, as if uncertain from whence came the source of the uproar.

"It is the Duc de Gueldres," said Marie, faintly. "Oh, Jacqueline, what shall I do?"

"No, I do not think it is," said Jacqueline, leaning further out of the window, while the uproar in the street grew louder every moment.

In a few minutes, forcing their way through the midst of the mêlée, appeared a body of armed men on horseback, led by a stately figure mounted on a coal-black charger. He was encased in a magnificent suit of silver armour, as flexible as silk; a black scarf, on which the cross of Burgundy was embroidered, was crossed over his breast, and a light silver morion, with a bunch of marigolds as a badge, rested on his head. An esquire in crimson and gold carried a banner, richly emblazoned, behind him.

He reined in his spirited Arabian as he neared the window out of which Marie was leaning. A flaming torch flared up at the moment, and threw a vivid light full upon him. He took off the silver morion and bowed to his horse's mane, and Marie recognised in the stately mien and courtly gesture of the mail-clad warrior the stranger knight, Max Theurdank.

Spurring his horse through the crowd, he came close up under the window.

"Said I not I would do and dare everything for thee?" he cried, looking up with an eloquent glance at the lovely young duchess.

"When thou art at liberty, fair lady, what guerdon may the wandering knight, Max Theurdank, claim from Marie de Valois?"

"He can ask nothing that will not be granted him," said Marie in a low voice, and blushing crimson beneath his impassioned glance.

"Perhaps he may crave more than thou dreamest," returned the knight with a smile. "Farewell, lady, for a brief space; yet a little while, and I will be with thee once more."

He bowed again, and with another eloquent glance passed on his way.

Unable to comprehend the scene, or its bearing on her own fate, Marie retired into the room, there to discuss with Mademoiselle de Brienne the mysterious reappearance of the knight and the curious behaviour of the crowd. They wearied themselves with conjecture, but no solution they could imagine appeared at all likely.

They were not kept long in suspense. In less than an hour a very humble deputation from the sapient Council of Ghent sought an interview with the duchess. It was to lay before her a communication from Frederic III., Emperor of Germany, for a treaty of marriage with his son, the Archduke Maximilian. This was a proposal in every way agreeable to the Gantois, and those fickle citizens were willing, at a moment's notice, to transfer their favour from the Duc de Gueldres to this new and powerful candidate for the hand of their liege lady. Marie received the proposal with unutterable delight. True she had never seen Maximilian in her life, but his fame as a noble and chivalrous hero had spread far and wide, and she saw in him a saviour and protector, one able and willing to stand between her and her unruly subjects.

Half an hour afterwards, radiant with beauty and happiness, magnificently attired, and seated in state in her reception-room, Marie awaited the coming of the young Archduke. The doors were thrown open, and preceded by ushers, and surrounded by a brilliant escort of knights and nobles, appeared a stately figure clad in silver armour, having a black scarf across his breast, and bearing a bunch of marigolds in his hand, His face sparkled with triumph, his eyes half-mischievously, half-triumphantly, sought the sweet face of his destined bride, and Marie de Valois recognised in the wandering stranger-knight, Theurdank, her hero of many a girlish dream, the Archduke Maximilian.

M. M. D.

THE JEWELLED CASKET.

"IS it true that that funny-looking old casket cost you five thousand pounds?"

"No, dear. But," added the old lady with a smile, "it is quite true that I once gave five thousand pounds for it."

"I see," she presently said, after enjoying for a moment the puzzled look of her questioner, "you will not rest till you have heard the whole story; and as it will be yours some day—nay, do not blush!—you ought to know it. No time like the present? No, but all are not like you, dear"—with a glance round the firelit circle—"they have heard me tell it so often."

We all declared it to be a tale that was ever fresh: as, indeed, what tale of family romance is not to such a gathering, if there be but present one who is to hear it for the first time, and in whose interest we can feel our own almost as eager and fresh as ever. So the fire was poked, cushions arranged, seats settled into more comfortably, and the story began.

"It is close upon fifty years ago since I was thinking of that old casket as I was jolted along into London, one dark November night, in the Ipswich coach. A pretty object I must have looked, in my corner; for, though barely twenty years old, and possessing my full share of good looks, I was so hidden in the big hood and wraps that I might, for all anyone could see to the contrary, have been an old woman of—well, as old as I am now. My eyes were red and swollen with tears, for it was no journey of pleasure that I was taking.

"My father, long a widower, had died some weeks before. Since then, I, his only child, had been staying with his sister, a doctor's widow, at Ipswich, and I was now returning to London as a governess. My aunt would gladly have kept me with her, but she was poor; and I should have felt ashamed of living upon her scanty means, when I had the opportunity offered me of earning my own livelihood.

"I had left Ipswich with a bold heart, but before long the sense of past sorrow and present loneliness had been too much for me, and I was thankful for the friendly shelter of the hood, which enabled me to cry quietly, unseen by my fellow-travellers. I was to be met at the coach-office by my cousin, a boy of seventeen, occupying a stool in the office of a Mr. Marshall, a wealthy merchant in the City, in whose house at Hampstead I was to be domiciled as governess.

"You see I was not altogether friendless in London; but in those days it was not so easy as it is now to go backwards and forwards between Hampstead and the City, and I could only count upon seeing Dick now and again by special favour. Then there was my old nurse living in London, at whose house I was to spend this first

night. The reason of my spending it with her instead of going at once to Hampstead was, that the next day the greater part of the furniture of what had been my home was to be sold at auction, and nurse and I were intending to brave the bustle of an auction-room to see the last of sundry old favourites among the household gods.

"Over and over again during the long dreary journey I had, in a vague, dreamy sort of way, passed in review every article. And now, as we were approaching our journey's end, my thoughts centred for about the twentieth time on that odd-shaped silver casket with its deceptive jewels.

"Its history was a strange one, bequeathed as it had been from father to son in the same words for many generations. Ever since, in fact, a remote ancestor of Queen Elizabeth's time had died broken-hearted at finding the fine fortune he had dreamt of, and for which he had gone through so much dirt and mire and bloodshed, torn from him in a moment.

"The ancestor in question had served with Drake, and returning from the famous raid upon Carthagena and the coast, had brought the casket back with him. How and when it had been acquired, at what risk, and by what means concealed during a long voyage, he only knew; but it was a prize worth risking much for, for he knew that it must be worth a fortune. How to realise the fortune was the question. That he had not so come by it as to dare to offer it openly for sale was clear, so he seems to have concealed it carefully resolving to realise it bit by bit. Even in that way for a long time he deferred taking any steps: but at last appears to have extracted one of the rubies in the upper row, to have taken it up to London, and offered it to a dealer in precious stones, who at once pronounced it to be false. Utterly dismayed at the intelligence, he returned home.

"But, on the way, hope revived. If the rubies should be false, might not the other stones be real? He reached home, dug up his treasure, extracted some of the other stones and returned with all haste to London. Alas! every stone was ruthlessly condemned, and the shock turned his brain. He dug up the casket, now only worth the silver of which it was composed, sat down with it before him, wrote out his will, signed it, and destroyed himself.

"By that will he charged his son never except in the direst necessity to part with that casket, but to keep it ever with him, and charge his heirs to do the same, as a perpetual warning against that covetousness and lust of wealth that had wrought his ruin. That charge had been solemnly observed; the clause in the will had remained the same, and I knew every word of it by heart. But my father had had no son and little to leave, and had made no will: and I, with some sort of feeling that ill luck had always attended the casket, had, to nurse's surprise, handed it over to be disposed of by public auction.

"I had not dared to tell my aunt of what I had done till the last parting moment, and had left her almost speechless with horror;

and now I was asking myself whether I had acted wrongly and rashly. Had I been too willing to assume that my father's omission to leave any charge as to the casket had arisen from some such feeling as my own, instead of attributing it to a conviction that a formal command was needless? Was I really doing wrong in parting with the wretched old sham?

"Worrying my brain with such thoughts, I at last suddenly dropped asleep, and on waking found myself alone in the coach, which had apparently come to a standstill. Jumping up, I arrived at the further consciousness that we were surrounded by a dense fog, through which the light of sundry torches with difficulty penetrated.

"Then I heard voices, Dick's, for one, in an eager inquiring tone; then a very pleasant but somewhat indignant voice blowing up the guard for having been so careless as to forget me. Then a torch shone at the door, and the same pleasant voice said 'Here she is, sure enough!' In another moment I was in the warm parlour of the inn with Dick, undoing my wraps, while the owner of the pleasant voice, whom I recognised as one of my fellow-travellers, was watching the mysterious process.

"I suppose he must have fancied the bundle in the coach corner to contain a little girl, for he seemed rather staggered at my appearance, and removing his hat with a slight flush and an air of apology, nodded to Dick and took his departure. He had scarcely disappeared when Dick suddenly asked, 'Mary, is that yours?' pointing to a small leather bag lying on the table. It was not mine, and Dick, who seldom lost much time over anything, was off in a moment after the stranger.

"As there was a glass over the chimney-piece I took advantage of Dick's absence to smooth my hair, and then sat down to toast my toes, which had grown cold enough in the coach; but as minute after minute went by and he did not return, I began to feel a little nervous and anxious at sitting alone in a strange inn.

"After a while I could bear it no longer, so I got up, opened the door, and turned in the direction by which I thought we had entered. The passage was dark, but I could feel the cold air against my cheek, and in a moment the fog was nearly choking me.

"I suppose I must have turned the wrong way, for I soon found it was not the door we had come in at, but one opening on the street. As I leant against the post half frightened, I was startled by hearing a shuffling of feet close to me, with a man's voice speaking almost into my ear.

"It was an unpleasant voice, and spoke in a sort of hoarse whisper, as if the fog had got into the speaker's throat. 'At three to the minute mind, and in the old corner,' it said. Then the feet shuffled again, and another voice muttered something inaudible. Then came more mutterings and shufflings, and apparently a parting, and steps came close past me, stopping for a last word:

"'Did you ever find me mistaken? I know a real stone when I see it, and I tell you if those emeralds—ugh!'

"The exclamation was evidently caused by some violent concussion, and the next moment I heard Dick's voice apologising. In an instant I was back, and apparently snugly settled by the fire as Dick came in, full of having lost, first the stranger, and then himself, in the fog, and finished up by knocking the breath out of an old Jew who was standing at the door.

"I need not trouble you with our adventures on the way from the inn to nurse's house, or with my reception there, for they have nothing to do with my tale; but through all our walk through the fog, and all nurse's kisses and welcome, I could not keep the last words of that old Jew out of my head. I called myself foolish for thinking of them: yet could not help asking myself the question, 'Could those stones he spoke of be those in the casket? What if the sham jewels I had so hated the sight of should be real after all?'

"The idea would come back to me again and again as fast as I drove it away.

"Instead of going to sleep when I got into bed I lay tossing about from side to side. No sooner was one tormenting train of thought dismissed than another was ready to take its place. In vain I reasoned, telling myself sternly how improbable it was that the words referred to my casket. The man was no doubt a dealer in stones, and what more likely than among the many gems passing through his hands, or met with in the way of business, there should be some as to the genuineness of which doubts might arise.

"Then came the thought, 'If stones that had been thought imitation sometimes turned out to be real, might not those in the casket be so, even though the old Jew's words might not refer to them?' What if I was going to dispose of, for a trifle, what might be worth hundreds of pounds?

"If I had only some friend skilled in jewels to consult. Though the Jew's words had been in my head all the previous evening, I had felt ashamed even to tell Dick what I had heard, lest I might show too plainly the current my thoughts had been following, and get laughed at for being such a goose as to imagine that, if the jewels were real, no one would have found it out in all these years.

"In the midst of contending thoughts I fell asleep, but not before I had settled with myself that I would, at least, confide in Dick, laugh at me as he might. Even that would be better than carrying the burthen of the doubt entirely on my own shoulders.

"But when sleep once laid hold of me he was unwilling to let me go; and nurse, thinking only how much good a long rest would do me after my journey, and little suspecting how precious every moment might be in my eyes, let me sleep on: so that when at last she roused me, and after dressing quickly I found my way downstairs, the hands of the kitchen clock pointed to a quarter to twelve.

My heart sank within me; Dick had been gone to his office hours. It was too late now to do anything—the sale was to commence at half-past, and it would take us all our time to get there. And, to tell the truth, when viewed by the light of day my hopes of the night before seemed a little bit chimerical. Still I could not give them up altogether; and although if Dick had been there it would have cost me no little struggle to tell him even a small part of all I had been thinking, yet his absence seemed to remove the last ray of hope. What nurse thought of my gloomy face as I hurried through my breakfast I do not know. But no doubt, if she gave it a thought at all, it was easily accounted for to her mind by the prospect of seeing my old surroundings knocked down to strangers.

"Out in the streets I managed at last to divert my thoughts from the one engrossing subject, and was chatting away merrily enough by the time we reached the auctioneer's rooms, for my poor furniture had not been thought worthy of a sale all to itself, and had been removed there for convenience, as the bills said.

"The sight of the place was not cheering, but Dick was waiting for us on the step, eager to tell us how the stranger of the night before had turned out to be Mr. Marshall's brother, the great diamond merchant; and how he recognised him when he came into the office.

"'And only think, Mary,' he exclaimed, 'that bag contained diamonds worth ever so many hundreds of pounds. He had not had it out of his hands all day, and cannot imagine how he came to put it down, unless it was in his surprise at what he thought was a little girl turning out to be such a blooming young lady. I believe you have made a conquest, for he quite flushed up when I spoke of you. I shouldn't wonder if he turns up here this afternoon, for when old Marshall told him all about that old casket he said he should like—but time's up and I must be off.'

"And away he went, leaving me in doubt as to what the unfinished sentence might mean, but with a pleasant consciousness that there was some chance of having some one at hand on whose judgment and assistance I might rely in case of need. We were in pretty good time, and took up our places at some distance from the auctioneer's desk, but where we should not be too far off to hear and see all that passed. I had never been at a sale before, and at first was too frightened at the crowd of strange rude-looking men and women to feel any amusement from their eccentricities of face and dress. But after a time my nervousness passed away, and I ventured to look about me, and began to wonder if the 'old corner' was in this room, and whether, among the many eager, inquisitive faces, there was one belonging to the voice I remembered so well.

"By the time the auctioneer was ready to begin I had surveyed all the corners pretty well, thinking that if I could but see an old Jew station himself in one of them, I should then feel sure that my in-

stinct had not been a wrong one, but that it was the stones of my casket about which so strong an opinion had been expressed.

"At first no one seemed to go into any corner, but to prowl about the room; so for a time I gave up the search in despair. When I looked round again, the room had filled considerably, but again I despaired. Every corner seemed to have its occupants, and those occupants seemed all of the Hebrew descent.

"The sale began; as lot by lot sold, my spirits went up or down according to the price realised, and my mind strayed from the absorbing thoughts of the casket. All this time I was glancing again and again at the door, watching for the friendly face and figure which I had been so thankful to think might come. At last I thought I saw him, but another instant showed me my mistake. The new comer, though very similar in height, was a much broader, bigger-framed man altogether. He gave a hurried glance round the room, and then proceeded to elbow his way slowly, but surely, through the crowd till he stopped beside an old oak press, which stood against the wall, not two yards from me.

"Just then a fresh lot was put up, a thing of little interest or value, but it caused me to look at the catalogue to see how many more lots would come before the casket. Only two, and I felt my heart begin to throb with expectation. Looking up, I saw that the clock above the auctioneer was just on the stroke of three, and instinctively I glanced at the door. And now I felt as if everyone must hear the beating of my heart, as the casket was held up for inspection, the auctioneer thinking it worthy of a little bit of an oration.

"It was, he said, an object of great antiquity, with a very romantic history attached to it. He hoped he should not exhaust our patience if he related a few facts connected with it.

"My heart almost stood still as I saw that the big man in the corner by the press had been joined by a wizened-looking old Jew, with a dirty grey beard and eyes like a ferret. The two were whispering together, and the eyes of both were fixed intently on the casket. My instinct had not been wrong: here were the 'voices of the mist.' But with the conviction came the necessity of resolving what to do. If they bid, and I were to bid against them, or get nurse to do so, how should I know when to stop? If only Mr. Marshall were here!

"For some time it really seemed as if I had summoned up courage for nothing, and that I must be mistaken. With the commencement of the bidding the interest of my neighbours seemed to cease, neither of them showing any eagerness or any intention of bidding.

"After awhile, however, I became conscious that the auctioneer's eyes travelled frequently in the direction of the pair in the corner in an inquiring sort of way. These appeals appeared to be unanswered, and at last the casket seemed in a fair way of being knocked

down to nurse for seventeen pounds ten. It was a far higher price than I had counted on as I came up in the coach, and I began to ask myself if I had been acting like a fool in letting my fancy run away with my reason, and was now buying in the casket for far more than its worth.

"Another moment and my, feelings underwent a sudden revulsion, for after almost allowing the hammer to fall, the old Jew at length slowly half closed his eyes, and with the auctioneer's 'Seventeen pound fifteen, thank you,' I felt the battle had begun. Bid by bid the casket advanced to twenty pounds, other bidders having taken courage from the old Jew's example. Then another pause, and then on and on until thirty pounds was reached. The auctioneer looked pleased, and tried hard to conceal his astonishment, while there was considerable animation amongst the assembled Hebrews.

"But, at thirty pounds, nurse, who had rebelled once or twice before, flatly refused to go on. 'I should be robbing you child,' she said, 'and I won't do it.'

"Again the hammer seemed about to descend, and I thought I could see a gleam of triumph in those ferretty eyes. Summoning all my resolution I called out 'Thirty-two.' The sound of my voice frightened me. The old man gave a rapid glance round the room to see who was his new opponent, and then as if to choke off all opposition retorted with 'Well, then, forty.'

"The words with which he thought to frighten me gave me renewed courage. I could not be mistaken in the harsh grating tone. 'Forty-five,' I cried, and again the grating voice said, 'Fifty.'

"I should only weary you if I were to tell you how we bid on, how from fives we got to tens, and from tens to fifties. I no longer felt afraid of the sound of my own voice, though by this time every eye in the room was fixed upon us two, all other bidding but ours having long ceased.

"The auctioneer no longer attempted to conceal his astonishment, but even in my excited state I could not help noticing that the casket was no longer permitted to be passed about the room as at first, and that the auctioneer's men, as it were casually, so placed themselves as to be able to keep a strict guard over it.

"Nurse meanwhile sat as if stupefied, evidently wondering whether she was not dreaming.

"You will wonder how I could go on; I, a girl of twenty: conscious as I was of the angry looks of the old Jew and his friends, and of the insolent stare of the bystanders.

"At first the old man capped my bids before they were fairly out of my mouth, but finding, I suppose, that he could not frighten me in that way, he changed his manner, and allowed the auctioneer, time after time, almost to let the hammer fall, as if in doubt whether he would bid again.

"So it went on, till from hundreds we got to thousands. By that time the Jew had lost his temper, and was again bringing out his bids like quick little snarls close upon the heels of mine.

"I had bid £2,800—how well I remember the amount, and the awful moment of suspense that followed it—when, after waiting a moment for the Jew to bid, I turned instinctively towards him, and saw him deep in conversation with his companion, apparently quite regardless of the auctioneer's repeated 'Two thousand eight hundred—it's against you, Mr. Isaacs.'

"That pause did more to unhinge me than all the previous excitement. What if he should not bid again! What if he had at last discovered the stones to be worthless, and I by going on too long had lost all. Again and again came the auctioneer's appeal: the Jew had apparently made up his mind not to bid; and I felt almost ready to faint. I think I should have done so, but simultaneously with the fall of the hammer came the snarling voice of the old man with 'Three thousand.'

"I felt like one reprieved as the auctioneer's 'Only just in time, Mr. Isaacs,' told me that the bid was not too late.

"You will hardly believe it, but with that knowledge came the desire to go on; and before I knew what I was doing, the words 'Three thousand two hundred' passed my lips.

"Again there was a pause, and looking up I saw that the Jew's companion had elbowed his way through the crowd, and was in earnest conversation with the auctioneer.

"Presently I was aware that the auctioneer was speaking to me, and asking if I could give such a reference as would assure him that he would be justified in receiving further bids from me.

"I was struck dumb. Here then was the end of all my hope. In my utter bewilderment it never occurred to me that I had only to give my name and address, and call nurse to identify me as the actual owner of the casket, to bid as I liked, or even stop the sale if I desired it.

"You will hardly believe it, but it seems to me that I must have become so bewildered as actually to have forgotten that the price of the casket, to whomsoever sold, would still be mine: and that the fear lest the Jew should get it for less than its value had given place to a fear lest he should get it at all.

"The auctioneer spoke in a low voice and with nothing offensive in his manner, but the strain upon my faculties had been too great, and I burst into tears. Even as I did so, comfort returned. A pleasant voice sounded in my ears, and my tall friend of the night before was quietly taking matters out of my hands, satisfying the auctioneer as to his own and my respectability, and leisurely scrutinising the casket with the air of one who thoroughly understood what he was about. In another moment he had followed up by a further bid with an offer which electrified the room, and made even

the old Jew open his eyes in astonishment, and the casket was knocked down to me for the sum of £5,000.

"'I can get you fully £6,000 for the stones, and you can keep the casket itself,' he said, as we sat in the comfortable library at Hampstead some six weeks after. He had brought me there, completely worn out with excitement, the night of the sale, and while I was sent off to bed by the kind motherly soul in whose house I was never, after all, to be governess, he astonished her husband with an account of my unexpected good fortune. How near I was to never enjoying that good fortune, and other good fortunes that was in store for me, Heaven knows. For weeks after that night I lay on a bed of fever; and at times the hopes of my ever rising from it again were but small.

"Now, for the first time as a convalescent had I been allowed to see visitors, and to hear to what extent I was likely to be an heiress. Six thousand pounds—I, whose expectations, as I rode up to London, had looked upon one hundred and fifty pounds as the utmost my belongings might realise! And he had explained how he thought the jewels would be best realised, for real stones they proved to be, almost all of them.

"'But I cannot let you take all this trouble for nothing, Mr. Marshall,' I said.

"'I don't intend to work for nothing, I can assure you,' he replied.

"He kept his word. A few months after, when I was quickly regaining strength under my aunt's care at Ipswich, I received a note from him to say that he had paid into the London agents of the Ipswich Bank the sum of six thousand three hundred pounds. But the matter had needed a great many journeys to Ipswich and back to arrange, so that when I expressed a fear to my aunt that Mr. Marshall had not repaid himself for his trouble, she only laughed, and said 'Tut, child, don't pretend not to know how he wants you to repay him.'

"Well, he was so good, and nice, and kind, and everything that a man should be, that I felt bound to pay him in the way he wished.

"As to the jewels, as I have said, they were almost all real; but not all: there were a few sham stones here and there. Whether it was that the goldsmith to whom my ill-fated ancestor had offered the stones had from some dishonest reason declared them false, or whether my ancestor himself had happened, by almost incredible mischance (looking almost like the finger of fate), to pick out only false stones, must remain for ever a mystery."

HAYMAKING.

I.

Across the sunny field she went,
Who is our sovereign lady:
She said, "Such days were never meant
To waste in corners shady."
She would not take a single nay,
Excusing or denying;
"Come out," she said, "and turn the hay,
Because the sun is shining."

II.

Some pleaded letters: "Why, you see,
'Tis mail-day for Golconda!"
Another: "When I've read these three
Last pages of 'Deronda.'"
Two miscreants who had slily fled
(Straw hat and Dolly Varden)
Were captured, lips and fingers red,
Deep in the kitchen garden.

III.

No pleading was the least excuse,
She brooked no contradiction:
"The heat you cannot make excuse."
"Those letters are a fiction!"
"You've played lawn tennis half the day,
Than which my work is cooler!"
And so, at last, she got her way,
Our most despotic ruler.

IV.

She set our stations row by row,
And marshalled us sedately;
"See, now, this is the way to go,
The swathes want turning straightly.
Don't seize your rakes like whips and oars,
Nor drag them limp and lazy."
The haymakers who drank their "fours,"
In shadow, thought us crazy.

V.

But not five minutes' work was done,
'Ere defalcations tried her;
Dick's line and Kate's merged into one,
And Jack must taste the cider.
While some would loiter, some would play,
And some would rest already—
"Alas!" she sighed, "for all I say,
I cannot keep you steady."

VI.

Across the field there swept a tide
Of voices, songs and laughter;
She raked her line with honest pride,
I followed silent after.
We left the others far behind,
O'ermastered by the weather;
And finished where the roses bind
The further hedge together.

VII.

What made me bold? some words we spoke
By chance; or silence sweeter;
While all the summer sounds awoke,
And sang in tender metre.
I only know, my fate essayed,
I won her sweet, resigning;
Nor did she blame me that I made
Hay while the sun was shining!

G. B. STUART.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXII.

LATER ON.

THE lichen-covered walls of Pomeroy Abbey stood out, gloomy and grand, under the bright rays of the October moon, now riding in the cloudless sky and nearing its full. A stormy day had given place to a calm evening, its air really genial. The forest of pines rose, dark and sombre, on the hill yonder; the sea in the distance sparkled as if it were a bed of diamonds.

Listlessly pacing about between the Keep and the front of the abbey, enjoying his after-dinner cigar, was Leolin Pomeroy. But, though his gait might be listless, his mind was almost preternaturally busy. Above him were the windows of the south wing: some of them lighted up, others dark and shadowy. By the frown upon Leolin's face as he glanced up at them, one might gather that his thoughts were not agreeable.

Time has elapsed since the events recorded in the last chapter. Whether we will or not, time goes on, on, on, rolling on its never-ceasing round, carrying with it ourselves and our shortening span of life. There has not been much to record: Pomeroy Abbey and those connected with it stand pretty much now as they stood before.

It may be remembered that Leolin was in high glee just then at the favourable news received from Rome. But the news turned out to be false. At any rate, premature. Whether the cardinal, in his zeal for the cause he had taken up, had been over sanguine, or whether his eminence was himself deceived, it matters not to enquire; all

Leolin knew—as he soon did know—was that the decree had not passed. The good cardinal was as much Leolin's friend as ever, but he could not get the decree of annulment pronounced. It was not pronounced yet: and the marriage of George Pomeroy still stood good in law.

Only the greater reason, argued Leolin, for his efforts to be redoubled. The cause seemed to him to grow more righteous day by day, his own wrongs more cruelly glaring. During this interlude of time a second girl was born to him, but it had died as the first had. There was now another infant, some few months old; a son, who had been named Hugh after the old lord. Since his birth, Lady Anna had been attacked with low fever; but she was getting stronger now. In Leolin's own heart he could but regard this little son as the heir of Pomeroy; and he hated the young lad, Rupert, worse than ever for usurping what ought not to be his.

But this was not the trouble exercising Leolin's mind to-night. The special perplexity filling his thoughts and darkening his brow was one that many have, more or less, suffered from—lack of money. One cannot carry on a secret suit for nothing. Proctors, lawyers, messengers; all must be paid. Leolin's income was but a small one, as the reader knows. Very small indeed for a man in his position of life. Lord Essington continued his allowance to them; besides slipping, now and again, a ten or twenty pound note into his daughter's hand whenever they were sojourning together: but it all seemed as a drop of water in the ocean with Leolin's ways and means for flinging it away on this unlucky and unjust suit. No wonder he had grown embarrassed.

This embarrassment was the matter lying on his heart to-night, bringing anger in its train. To think that she, inhabiting that south wing above him, the Lady of Pomeroy, should possess so much, and he so little! The income offered to him by Sybilla he persisted in declining haughtily and ungraciously; nevertheless, he coveted the means that were hers. And what on earth she did with her money, he could not imagine.

The latter question had long puzzled him. That Sybilla lived in less state than the reigning widow of any Lord of Pomeroy had lived yet, was patent to the world. Not a tithe hardly, certainly not a fourth, had she spent of the revenues that pertained to her: or, strictly speaking, that pertained to her son; but George Pomeroy had left her in sole control of it. The superfluous yearly thousands, what became of them?

No one seemed to know where it went or what was done with it. James Knox, Sybilla's agent, could not tell, neither could Mr. Hildyard: most certainly Leolin could not. Mr. Hildyard—upon whom, by the way, trouble had fallen sharply—had continued to act for Leolin in the private suit against the child, though in a compulsory kind of way. No end would have been gained by

his throwing the cause up, but his heart never was in it. It might be said that Leolin spent nearly half his time in dashing up to London and dashing back again; he seemed to be never at rest save when holding consultations with the lawyer or with others. And, during one of these recent visits, from which Leolin had but just returned, he obtained some information.

It came to him incidentally, through a banker with whom Leolin was conversing. The Lady of Pomeroy was putting by large sums yearly; not in her own name, or in that of her son, but in the name of one Thomas Barkley.

It took Leolin not very long to decide that this Thomas Barkley must be the Major Barkley who had been George's great friend in India. His name was Thomas. Major Barkley had retired from the service after George's death; had since spent some of his time in foreign travel: twice he had travelled down to Pomeroy on a visit to Sybilla and her little son. During these visits Leolin had condescended to accept the Lady's occasional invitations to meet him at her table, and he had been certainly impressed in Major Barkley's favour, who appeared to possess good sense and to be a man of rectitude and a thorough gentleman. But why should this man be enriched by the Pomeroy revenues? What was the meaning of it? Pacing about there under the abbey walls, with the fair moon shining full upon him, and the rippling of the sea sounding faintly in his ears in the silence of the night, Leolin Pomeroy was weaving to himself a pretty little nightmare of romantic doubt.

"She must be in Barkley's power—deceitful, crafty woman! that seems certain," spoke he to himself, thus politely alluding to the Lady of Pomeroy. "I wonder if her agent, Knox, knows anything of this? I've a great mind to ask him. What an out-and-out shame it is!—that I should be at a standstill for want of money, while she is lavishing—ah! good evening to you, father!"

"Is it you or your ghost?" cried Father Andrew, merry as usual, and stouter and redder than of yore. Coming from the direction of the chapel with a fleet step he had overtaken Leolin. "I thought you were in London."

"I got home an hour ago," said Leolin, throwing away the end of his cigar.

"I've been into the chapel: seeing that the black draperies were up and all things in readiness for to-morrow," remarked the priest. And the words brought to Leolin's mind what perhaps he had momentarily forgotten—that the morrow would be a solemn day with the Pomeroys; the anniversary of the dreadful death of Guy.

"A nice night," remarked Leolin.

"At present. But I don't like those clouds over the forest: they mean stormy weather of some kind. I am going on to Lamp's,"

added the priest; "his mother's worse. How do you find Lady Anna looking?"

"Bravely. She tells me she walked out to-day."

They strolled side by side to the front of the abbey, talking, when the priest continued his way and Leolin stood still to light another cigar. Puffing away at it, he resumed the thoughts which Father Andrew had interrupted.

"I shall speak to Knox. Don't know that it will be of any use: he never shows himself too communicative on his mistress's affairs—by her orders, I suppose. And if—Why, who's this? Knox himself! En parlant du diable, on voit ses cornes. What does he want here at this hour?"

James Knox was approaching the abbey gateway with a quick step. He soon disappeared within it. Leolin followed him to the business room, and found him rummaging amidst some papers on his large desk by the light of a solitary candle.

"You work late," was Leolin's greeting.

James Knox laughed. He was a pleasant man, and a gentleman by birth, though he had become the agent, or steward, for the Lady of Pomeroy. A little dark man with bright dark eyes. In early days he and the young Pomeroys had played together.

"I am not at work," he answered. "I took home in my pocket, as I thought, a list of accounts that I meant to go over leisurely to-night; but when I got there I could not find it. Not a single pocket was it to be fished out of. One does not like to lose things, Mr. Leolin, and I am come up to look for it."

Leolin sat down near the desk. In the same seat where the reader once saw him sitting while talking to John Gaunt, when Leolin, poor fellow, deemed himself Lord of Pomeroy. Knox was turning over papers and pigeon-holes with a rapid hand.

"Now what can I have done with that list?" cried he. "It is not here. Hope no light fingers filched it out of my pocket, going home in the twilight!"

"Is it anything of consequence?"

"Well, no. But I shall have to make out another. It was a list of the rents and moneys paid in this last year."

"Talking of rents, the revenues of this estate must be improving I fancy," carelessly observed Leolin.

"They are. But it righted itself in your brother George's time. Gaunt did wonders for it."

"Ay: he knew who he was working for," was Leolin's reply, given in anything but a gracious tone. "But now, with all these good revenues coming in—and they are good—what does my brother George's widow do with them?"

James Knox turned his eyes, honest eyes they were, full upon Leolin. "I don't know," he answered; "she does not tell me what. She does not spend them."

"She does not spend a tithe of them, you mean," retorted Leolin. "But you must know how she employs them, Knox—in your position here."

"I assure you I do not. The moneys are paid in by me to the Owlstone Bank, and that's all I have to do with them. The Lady of Pomeroy no doubt transmits them to Mr. Hildyard."

"For investment—you think?"

"Naturally for investment. She would not keep them lying idle."

"Well, then, Knox, I can tell you that *nothing* is transmitted to Mr. Hildyard. Not a single sixpence. Hildyard is as much in the dark as I am. He was good enough for my father, and for my brothers, poor Guy and George; but it seems he is not so for the lady at present reigning here. Somebody else must act for her in regard to money matters: Hildyard does not."

Mr. Knox shook his head. This was no concern of his; he did not wish to make it his, or to speak of it. He began searching for his lost list again.

"Has that Barkley anything to do with the business matters here?" resumed Leolin.

"Barkley? What Barkley?"

"Major Barkley—formerly my brother George's friend. You must remember him, Knox."

"Oh yes, I remember now—Major Barkley. He has stayed at the abbey once or twice. Certainly he has not anything to do with our business here. Why should he have—and how could he have? He is abroad."

Leolin did not choose to say what he had heard. Knox, giving up his list for a bad job, prepared to lock up the desk.

"You are *sure* he has not?" persisted Leolin.

"Has not what?"

"A finger in the pie that contains the Pomeroy hoards?"

"Certainly not. So far as I know and believe."

"He was left executor, you know, to George's will," added Leolin, as if seeking to account for his questions.

"But his business in connection with that was over and done with long ago," was the agent's answer: and he took his departure.

Standing in the gateway to finish his cigar, Leolin saw a chariot approaching, its lamps shining like two great stars. Jeffs was on the box, by which Leolin knew the carriage must be that of the Lady of Pomeroy, and no doubt contained his sister Joan, who had been staying at the convent on a visit to the Lady Abbess. She was now coming for the morrow's services and to be the guest of Sybilla.

Leolin waited to receive his sister. And then, their greeting over, he turned out on his solitary walk again, the perplexity, touching Major Thomas Barkley, running riot in his brain.

Autumn weather had been genial that year: the sun bright, the air warm up to the middle of October. But to-day wintry weather had come in. The skies were gloomy; the whistling wind rose in mournful strains, now rushing along in terrific gusts, and now gently shaking the trees with a sound of lamentation. Thus it had been since early morning.

Twilight was drawing on apace. In one of the rooms of the south tower sat the Lady of Pomeroy and her sister-in-law, Joan, both habited in the deepest mourning, their custom on this particular day. This apartment, one of elegance and refinement, but small, looked on to the court-yard.

"How the wind howls!" exclaimed Miss Pomeroy, shivering as the blast seemed to shake the tower. "Sybilla, I wonder you prefer this tower sitting-room on these windy nights."

"It is more cheerful, Joan. The drawing-rooms in the wing are large and dreary, for they look out on that moaning, shrieking forest over the hill, with its dark trees bowing down. I think trees are the most melancholy objects you can be near when the wind puts on this peculiar sound. In this room, though the wind seems to shake it, we look out on the court, and see the lights and the signs of life."

"I have observed that on this day the wind always does come up in these blasts," returned Joan, in a whisper that seemed to shrink from its own echo. "It is as if the dead were abroad."

"What now, Joan? What do you mean by 'this day?'" quickly asked the Lady of Pomeroy.

"It is the seventeenth of October," replied Miss Pomeroy, as she crossed herself.

"Do I not know it? Have we not attended the services in the chapel? kept it as one of the most solemn we can ever know? But, Joan, do not speak of the dead being abroad: you should shake off the Pomeroy superstition."

"It is now nine years since the fatal night: four of its anniversaries I have passed in the abbey, and each time it has been one of these howling, gloomy days. They are enough to call up feelings of superstition in themselves alone."

"Not so, Joan: save to a mind too prone to indulge in it. But you seemed to connect your idea of the 'dead being abroad' with this particular day."

"As I do," answered Joan.

That that day nine years ago had been a memorable one for the Pomeroys none can deny. In that room of the west tower, exactly opposite to the one they now sat in, a room shunned for long long years before as being the haunt of a departed spirit, wronged in life, Guy met his dreadful death by Rupert's hand—and Rupert had ever since been an exile.

Miss Pomeroy rose, with a quick movement, almost as though her thoughts were too much for her, and drew aside the window-curtain.

There she stood, looking down on the quadrangle. The rooms in the north wing, inhabited by Leolin's household, were gay with many lights: and, it may be, that Joan felt cheered by the silent companionship. Light clouds sailed along the otherwise clear sky; the moonlight shone full on the west wing and tower.

"It has turned out a bright night," she observed, returning to the table and taking up her work; "I never saw a brighter. By the way, I don't think I gave you Sister Mildred's message, Sybilla. She asked me to tell you that the poor little orphan-girl, whom you have placed in the convent, is a sweet, well-disposed child, clever, and will do credit to the sisters."

"I am glad of that; I thought she would. But—about Sister Mildred herself? Does it strike you, Joan, that she is getting to look old? She has seemed to me to be very poorly of late."

"She has been so worried, you see, by that business connected with the Hildyards. Indeed, it has worried the whole community. As the ladies say, it has brought them all into disrepute."

"I do not see that," dissented Sybilla. "They were not to blame; neither is blame attached to them. It was a very grievous thing."

"It was a shameful thing," amended Joan. "Nothing like it had ever occurred in the convent before. It is killing Mr. Hildyard."

"It must have been a terrible blow to him. When did you see him last?"

"Shortly before I came down here. Henry Capel had to consult him upon some matters when we were in London, and I went with him to Lincoln's Inn. You cannot think how he is changed, poor man; worn and grey and sad: heart and spirit seem to be alike broken. I fear he is not long for this world."

"Oh, I can feel for him!" earnestly spoke Sybilla. "There is no trouble tells home like that brought by a rebellious child. I trust he will rally: matters, in regard to Frances, may not be so bad as they look on the surface."

"I can't see much hope of that. There's just a loophole, of course. I asked him," continued Joan, dropping her voice, "whether anything had been since heard or seen of Rupert."

Lost in other thoughts, Sybilla looked up in surprise. "Oh, yes," —catching Joan's meaning—"since the clerk, Collins, saw him on board the Spanish ship. What did Mr. Hildyard say?" she added after a pause.

"That nothing, so far as he knows, has been seen or heard of Rupert since then. I hope and pray it will not be! That is a long while ago. If we could but hear that he was dead!"

"Don't, Joan."

"I know it seems a fearful thing to say of a brother," wailed Joan. "But I speak for his own sake, as well as for ours, Sybilla, for what a bitter fate his must be—what a life of dread! Poor, misguided Rupert!"

"Hush, Joan," interposed Sybilla, lifting a finger warningly. "Here are the children."

"Aunt Joan, Aunt Sybilla, we are come to say good-night. And we have had a delightful evening, and I won all Rupert's sugared almonds."

The ready voice, with its dash of imperiousness, belonged of course to Miss Mary Pomeroy. It was not deemed well that the children should find this anniversary day altogether one of gloom, and Rupert had been allowed to accept the invitation to take tea with Mary and her French governess. Rupert had a daily tutor now; one who had replaced Miss Haberdale. Rupert was the same gentle, refined boy he had ever been, with the graceful figure and beautiful face: and he never rebelled at the tyranny exercised over him by the young lady.

"I am glad you have had a pleasant evening, my dears," spoke the Lady of Pomeroy. "And how did you amuse yourselves?"

"Oh, we played at dominoes. Rupert wanted to do geographical puzzles, but I chose to have dominoes, and I won all his sugared almonds," imperiously added Miss Mary. "Aunt Joan, do you believe governesses ever go to heaven?"

"Mary, how randomly you speak!" reproved Joan. "You would be very sorry to think they did not."

"I don't believe mademoiselle will go. I told her so. Ill-natured thing! I wanted to sit up longer to-night as Rupert was there, and she would not let me, and rang for Bridget."

In proof of this, there stood Bridget, waiting at the door, having attended the children to the south tower.

"Mademoiselle de Garonne has succeeded in getting the upper hand of her in a degree," smiled Joan, as the children withdrew, Mary with all the noise her shoes would make. "But what an imperious little spirit it is! Just the same that her father's was before her—poor Guy."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MYSTERY.

On this same evening, Alice, widow of Guy Pomeroy, sat in her dressing-room, its windows facing the west wing and west tower. This anniversary day, coming round year after year, could not be pleasant for her. Pleasant?—say, rather, most miserable. She had attended, with the rest of the abbey, the services in the chapel: at the conclusion of the last one, vespers, she had shut herself in her rooms, closing them against intruders.

On the anniversary of the death of any one of the Lords of Pomeroy, it was customary to say a mass year after year in the chapel, for the repose of his soul. But the death of Guy had been

dreadful; and he had passed away unshriven; so that this anniversary, the 17th of October, was made doubly solemn in regard to its religious observances, and kept as a strict fast until sunset. Now that the services were over, Mrs. Pomeroy sat in her solitary room, her hands listlessly clasped upon her mourning dress, remembrance her sole companion.

Her eyes fixed on the windows of the haunted room, the terrible room which had been so fatal to her, there she sat, and indulged her reflections. What could those reflections be? We cannot penetrate them: cannot well realize the remorse that must have been her portion. For it was she who had brought about the terrible calamity; she, and she alone. What though no absolute guilt stained her memory, there remained her folly, her sinful folly: and, be you very sure, of that folly she had long ago repented with bitter sighs and tears. Through her and her folly Guy had died, and Rupert was an exile. But she had never condoned the fact that Guy won her by a lie; and her feeling towards him was still one of dislike, rather than of love.

The mental distress in which she continually lived had been recently added to by her becoming acquainted with that hazardous visit of Rupert's to England in the Spanish barque; which fact had previously been kept from her. She learnt it through inadvertence. During Joan's late sojourn at the convent, she drove to Pomeroy one day unexpectedly, and found only Mrs. Pomeroy. Sybilla had gone with the two children to Owlstone, Lady Anna was lying down, Leolin was in London. Though not choosing to accept Mrs. Pomeroy's hospitality in a general way, Joan could not in good manners refuse it now, and she partook of luncheon. During the meal, Mrs. Pomeroy, in her sad, subdued way, spoke a few words concerning an unhappy wanderer, an acquaintance, who had been obliged to fly his country. Joan thought she referred to Rupert, and replied that he had not been heard of since that dangerous visit. The next moment Joan saw her error: she had forgotten that the matter had never been disclosed to Mrs. Pomeroy, and she dropped the subject abruptly. But the alarm and distress depicted on Alice's face were so great, her petition to be enlightened so pitiful, that Joan had no resource but to disclose briefly the facts; and she went away haughtily dissatisfied with herself for having been betrayed into alluding to it. It was the first time, all these nine years, that the name of Rupert had been breathed by her to Mrs. Pomeroy.

Since then, it was not a week ago, Alice Pomeroy had lived in the most intense dread. The affair had taken quite an exaggerated hold on her mind. In every shadowy nook she saw the ill-fated Rupert, cowering and shivering and hiding himself from the law: and she saw, in imagination, the officers of that same dread law pouncing upon him.

Did he often venture into this dangerous kingdom?—was he in

England even now? From fearing that he might be, she grew to believe that he was: and an active terror stirred her.

All through these dreary years her heart had ached with its suppressed pain. Many a time she had longed, with a yearning, irrepressible longing, to behold Rupert once again—that she might tell him how she deplored the past, how she deplored the bitter consequences it had entailed on him. If he suffered, she suffered. She had never—let it be repeated—forgiven the part acted towards her and Rupert by Guy; she felt it keenly and resentfully yet; she would picture to herself the miserable life of Rupert; suspense had racked her as to whether he was dead or alive. This revelation of Miss Pomeroy's, although it referred to some three or four years back, seemed to prove to her that he yet lived—and that they might meet again.

The moon had risen high as Mrs. Pomeroy sat, and its rays fell full on the haunted chamber: so had they fallen on the ever-to-be-remembered night, when she was within it with Rupert. She raised her hands to her still young and beautiful face, and, pressing its temples, spoke aloud in her abandonment of remembrance and grief.

"Will he dare to venture back?—will he dare to come; here, to Pomeroy? Oh, that he would, that I might warn him! I would ask but one short, brief interview with him that I might tell him his visits to England were known and watched for—as I make no doubt they are; that treachery is abroad and that he must hasten to put the seas between him and his enemies. We might speak just one word of comfort to each other's worn and weary heart, to strengthen ourselves in bearing up on our lone and miserable way."

A half moan, wrung from her distress, and Mrs. Pomeroy flung her hands upon her eyes, as if she would shut out the sight of that fatal west tower. Presently her hands fell on her gown, and she spoke again.

"He might have come back at first, and assumed his rights. He ought to have assumed them at the time—have stayed to battle the affair out, instead of running away. I have always thought so. Had he possessed one proper friend to smooth the way for him, he might have stayed. He surely might. Let them talk as they will, punishment could not have justly fallen upon him. Though he might perhaps have had to stand his trial, he would never have been punished. It was no murder; it was a scuffle—am not I here to testify to it? Guy drew his pistol upon him, and then they closed with each other, and Rupert turned the pistol back in self-defence. I know it must have been so. He is the true lord; even Sybilla says it, though it would dispossess her son; and he ought to be reigning here as such. It is too late now for this; his very absence seems to the world to testify to his sense of guilt. No one is for him; even Joan condemns him; and the law would only seize hold on him if he ventured

here. So there's no help for it; no end to the wearing pain of his unhappy life! Oh, Rupert! if the past might but be re-lived. If I might but see you once again! If——"

Mrs. Pomeroy's voice died suddenly, but her mouth remained open in dread amazement. If ever she saw the figure of Rupert Pomeroy, she thought she saw it then, in the haunted room. In spite of the wild wish she had just expressed, she gazed in dismay, striving to peer beyond the panes of the window in the west tower on which the moonlight fell, striving to still her beating heart.

The longer she gazed the more terrified she grew. That some one was moving about, inside that room, was certain. It appeared to be a man's figure of remarkable height, as Rupert's was. Yes, surely it was Rupert! He came forward more than once, and she distinctly saw his head bent against the panes of the window: and, even as she looked, a light for one brief moment appeared in the room, so that she discerned the outlines of his form and face. A strange thrill ran through her: it was undoubtedly Rupert Pomeroy. But the light—what was that for? It appeared as though a match had been struck and as instantly extinguished.

Curious fancies come into a woman's mind: and into a man's also sometimes. Mrs. Pomeroy arrived at the conclusion, by a process of reasoning which had little of reason in it, that Rupert had struck the flash of light to give token of his presence. The flash must have been as visible to the other windows as to hers; wondering eyes might likewise be at them; and a terrible dread took possession of her.

What could he want—and in that place, she asked herself. Could he be aware that his liberty and life lay in peril in this his native land; and that an incautious word dropped by a servant might spread the news far and wide, and bring that peril swooping down upon him? Oh, she must contrive to warn him of his danger; it seemed to be almost as a sacred duty laid upon her—for had it not been she who helped to bring the trouble upon him? It might be that, in heaven's mercy, no one but herself had discerned the flash of light, or seen that anyone was in the tower. Surely heaven, looking down upon his misery all these long years, must, and would, be merciful to him now!

In the excitement that possessed her, she lost sight of the dread journey that would be hers, in going to the west tower. There might be no time to lose: for in that room he surely would not linger: but that he had contrived to get to it to make known his presence, and to signal some one from the abbey to him, she could not doubt.

Throwing a large black shawl over her head to ward off recognition, Mrs. Pomeroy stole down the stairs to the cloisters, as she had once stolen years before, and gained the north tower. But its door was locked. How then could Rupert have gained admittance to the west wing? She drew into a corner to solve the mystery.

She could not do it. Gliding back, she entered a passage that took her to the window of the key-closet, in which a light burned. Peering closely in, she saw the bunch of keys belonging to the closed rooms hanging in its respective niche. What a mystery it all was!—now, as then. But she must gain admittance for Rupert's sake. Had he kept false keys by him all these years?

Speeding back, she entered the day nursery. Bridget was kneeling down in the dark, her face just above the sill of the window, and as close to its glass as Mrs. Pomeroy's had just been to that of the key-closet. She started up with a cry of surprise at the entrance of her mistress.

"Why are you in darkness?" sharply demanded Mrs. Pomeroy. "What are you looking at?"

Bridget made no reply. She opened the store cupboard to get out her candle and box of matches; but before lighting it she turned to draw down the blind.

"I ask you, Bridget, what you were looking at: glued to the window in that manner! Let the blind alone; and tell me."

"I will tell you, madam, if you please, but I do not know whether it would be well to do so," replied Bridget, speaking readily, now that she had broken the silence.

"Are you to constitute yourself a judge of what may or may not be told me?" haughtily returned Mrs. Pomeroy. "Speak instantly."

Bridget drew away from the faint light that came in at the window; the moon did not shine on these rooms as it did on those opposite; and her voice dropped to a whisper. "Madam, Mr. Rupert is come back at last."

Mrs. Pomeroy's heart fluttered. Her fears were confirmed.

"How do you know it, Bridget?—Have you seen him?" she inquired, and her imperious tone had changed to one of dread.

"I have seen him every night for a week in the haunted room opposite," replied Bridget. "I saw him to-night, a quarter of an hour ago, and I was watching for him again, madam, when you came in."

"You have seen him for a week past!" repeated Mrs. Pomeroy, in utter amazement.

"Just one week ago this night, madam, was the first time. It was a deal later than this, and a dark night. Miss Mary was restless: she had gone to bed in anger with mademoiselle, and she could not sleep, and called to me to go in and tell her some tales. Well, madam, I did so, and sat till she was asleep, and then I came back here. I stood a few minutes at the window before relighting my candle, which I had put out, and was watching the servants' lights in the north wing—there were plenty of them alight, for, if you remember, madam, Mr. Leolin had a gentlemen's dinner party that night: it was the night before he went to London. I was looking at their lights, when all in a moment I saw a flash of light in the haunted

room ; it went out again, but not before I had caught sight of some form that looked like Mr. Rupert's. I was struck with fright. I thought what will become of him if he lets himself be seen. I watched the best part of the night, but I saw no more, and I have watched every night since, and seen him in it : never for above a moment until last night. Last evening, madam, he stood for five minutes, good, at the window in the moonlight."

"It must be madness," gasped Mrs. Pomeroy. "Have you mentioned this, Bridget ?"

"No, madam, not to a single soul," replied the woman, warmly. "I know the danger of that too well."

"Is he much altered ?" faintly asked Mrs. Pomeroy.

"Nay, madam, but how can I tell from this distance ? One must get near to him to judge of that."

"Bridget"—and Mrs. Pomeroy's voice trembled with its emotion —"are you sure you are not mistaken ? Is it veritably Mr. Rupert ?"

"Was there ever a tall, noble form like his, madam—save the lord's, and he has been under the sod these nine years. Six feet three inches, and of noble proportions ! No, madam, I cannot mistake the form or the turn of the head of Mr. Rupert Pomeroy."

"I thought I saw him myself this evening," whispered Mrs. Pomeroy. "You are *sure* you have not told of this ?" she added, remembering the girl's inveterate propensity for gossip.

"Surely not," answered Bridget : "it is not I that would bring ill luck upon a Pomeroy. But I wish he could be warned of the hazard he runs : others may see him, and might haste with open mouth to spread the news abroad. I misdoubt me that he must have taken up his abode in those rooms for safety. But how can he get his food ?"

Mrs. Pomeroy leaned against the window-frame, and thought. Her project of penetrating to the west tower was growing more feasible.

"Bridget," she said, arousing herself with a start, "we cannot let Mr. Rupert stay there unwarned. You must go into the north wing and get me the keys. I will go up myself."

Bridget could scarcely answer for surprise. "*I* get the keys, madam ! Cox would never trust me with the keys !"

"You can take them without his knowledge. Use your cunning. The keys are hanging there, for I have just seen them. Go at once : every moment increases Mr. Rupert's peril, and he must be warned away. I will await you in the cloisters."

Mrs. Pomeroy waited what seemed to be an interminable time. Bridget came at last, and began boasting of the stratagem by which she had obtained possession of the keys ; but Mrs. Pomeroy cut the tale short, and desired her to go indoors.

"Madam—shall you like to go up alone ?" whispered the woman.

"I will do it, whether I like it or not," was the valiant reply of

Mrs. Pomeroy. "Were two persons to go up, their movements might attract attention. Go you back to the nursery, Bridget, and be silent as the grave."

Her heart beating strangely, Mrs. Pomeroy went up the stairs of the north tower, and into the rooms of the west wing, unlocking each door as she came to it. The windows of all these rooms, as may be remembered, faced the court-yard, and the moonlight streamed in, affording her sufficient light to read the labels on the keys. Trembling and sick, not only at the thought of meeting Rupert, but with the dread of passing through these dismal rooms alone, about which such ghostly tales were told, she swept swiftly on and gained the haunted room in the west tower, the wind shrieking ominously in her ears. She marvelled at her own courage: but that so much was at stake, and that she was hastening to his sheltering presence, he so strong, so able, in that sense, to afford protection, she could never have dared it.

Did she remember in that moment how she had last stolen into that room, nine years ago? Did she remember her second visit to it on that same fatal night? How she had crept in with steps of dread to discover the effects of the fearful scuffle from which she had flown, and had fallen over her husband, dead upon the ground? And now she was creeping into it again, to find—what? Nothing pleasant, she might be sure. Though this time she was at least actuated by a sense of duty.

Pushing aside the hangings of the haunted room, she stepped into it, expecting to see Rupert. But the room was empty. The bright moonlight, streaming in, very bright indeed that night, enabled her to see every part of it. The room looked just as it had looked that former night; nothing seemed to have been touched, nothing changed. The old red velvet furniture was there, the nun's picture, with the burn partly defacing it, hung in its place behind the velvet curtain.

But where was Rupert? What was this mystery? The rooms all locked, and this one empty! She began to shiver and shake.

"Rupert!" she called out, faintly at first, but desperation gave her courage, and her frightened voice echoed through the silent rooms. "Rupert, Rupert!"

It echoed with a weird, ghostly sound, blending with the wind that howled and laboured without. Mrs. Pomeroy sat down on the broad old velvet settle: her superstitious fancies, suppressed in the moment of need, were coming back to her, thick and threefold. What if the nun's ghost—so often seen in that room in years gone by, if the ghost seers were to be believed—should appear to her?—What if the ghost of her murdered husband should appear to her? She uttered a smothered shriek at the supposition, and hid her face in her hands and bent it down on her knees.

What had become of Rupert she knew not; but for his sake, that she might speak to him just one word of warning, she stayed on,

hoping he would return. She strove to put away the superstitious dread that was attacking her; she strove to think the wind did not moan like a troubled spirit; she strove to forget the tales which had been prevalent after the murder, that Guy "came again." Did you ever so strive, faint-hearted reader? But possibly you never were in a haunted room at the dead of night, far removed from human ear. If you have undergone the ordeal, did you succeed in reassuring yourself to calmness?—or did not, rather, the awful, unearthly dread, the feeling, which can neither be experienced, nor told of in the broad daylight, in human companionship, did it not increase until—until ——But let it pass: you don't like to be reminded of these cowardly moments, though you would not live them over again to have years added to your life. What then must it have been for Alice Pomeroy, with her unhappy remembrance and her stings of conscience?

She strove. She battled with the haunted atmosphere, with the shrieking wind, with the consciousness that that evening was the ominous anniversary of Guy's death: she neither stirred hand nor foot, she scarcely dared to breathe, she could not have looked up for the wealth of worlds. Just as a timid child hides its face in the dark, and dares not raise it, lest its eyes should encounter some fabulous monster, so was it with Mrs. Pomeroy. She began to ask herself how she could get back again, how escape out of the haunted tower, through the rooms and down the stairs: she should never dare to go! Must she sit where she was till morning light?

Some talking below in the court-yard imparted to her a gleam of fresh courage, and she glanced up again. She *must* make an effort to get away: but not until she had once more tried to apprise Rupert that she was there.

"Rupert, where are you?" she called out with desperate effort; "oh! Rupert, why don't you come to me? Only for one moment! I have ventured up here for your sake."

Hark! What was that? A sigh?—a groan?—it sounded like it. But where did it come from? It was not the wind; it was a totally different sound. It seemed to be in the walls—or was it but in her own imagination? A more lively terror than before fell upon Mrs. Pomeroy, and once more she hid her face. How long it was before she looked up again, she knew not: for ghostly terrors had full hold of her now. She would have forfeited half her remaining life to be back in her home again.

Well had it been for her peace of mind, that she never had looked up: for there, right against the nun's picture, standing as he had stood that night, not many minutes before his death, when he had burst in upon their wretched and foolish interview, that in truth had been partly passed in abusing him, there was his apparition —that of her husband, Guy. The moonlight shone in upon his ghastly face, upon his hare-lip, red once, but livid now; and his dull

eyes were bent upon her in mingled sadness and anger, just as she had seen them bent in life. He seemed to be dressed as he was dressed the night of his death, in a plain suit of black, and the one arm was raised, as if in anger at the loving words which had escaped her; raised just in the menacing way that the nun's arm was in the picture.

How Mrs. Pomeroy left the couch and reached the window, she never afterwards remembered: some instinct prompted her thither. She went sideways: *she could not turn her eyes from that awful figure*, standing there with its face of reproach; it was fascinating her like the gaze of the basilisk. But now it seemed to be changing its position, to be gliding towards her; and, with a low, suffocating sob, that sounded like the bark of a dog, Mrs. Pomeroy turned to the window, dashed both her hands through it, shrieked out for succour in her terrible agony, and then fell down senseless.

The crash of glass was heard, with the shriek for aid; the hands, wringing wildly, were seen. Bridget, possessing enough curiosity for any ten women, and that's saying a great deal, had returned to her room, and putting open the window, thrust her head out to see anything there might be to be seen opposite. To do her justice, she had also a better motive—her mistress might be seized with fright up there, and signal for her. So Bridget's eyes watched the west tower keenly as a cat watches a mouse, and Bridget was at length rewarded by seeing and hearing more than she had bargained for—the hands flung out, and the cry for help, as from some poor creature in its last agony.

Bridget was thunderstruck. Were the hands and the cry Mrs. Pomeroy's? Bred up in the Pomeroy superstitions, Bridget came to the conclusion that Mrs. Pomeroy must have seen the ghost; meaning, of course, that of the nun. In her astonishment and fear, Bridget stood where she was, giving no alarm, hastening with no aid, simply staring at the ominous window. As she gazed, a figure seemed to grow in it; the same towering figure which she had attributed to Rupert: but now its face was brought close and full to the panes, and Bridget recognised it in the bright moonlight—the ghastly face of the dead Lord of Pomeroy. With a smothered howl, not unlike the cry which had escaped from Mrs. Pomeroy, Bridget turned from the room and tore away in her fright; she cared not much whither, so that she got into human companionship. She flew out to the great gateway of the abbey, and, crossing it, entered the noble hall, belonging to the part occupied by Leolin. A servant confronted her.

"Are you out of your mind, Bridget?" he asked, noting her wild looks.

"Let me alone. Where's your master?"

Ignoring ceremony, waiting for nothing, Bridget went on to the state apartments. In one of them sat Leolin and Father Andrew, playing at chess. She made a hasty reverence to the priest, who, as

confessor to the household, periodically became the depositary of Bridget's peccadilloes; but her wits were too far scared away to allow of much reverence just now.

"May all the saints have mercy upon Pomeroy!" uttered she, pretty nigh crazed with terror, touching the back of a chair to steady herself. "The lord's come again."

"What do you mean?" demanded Leolin, amazed at her extraordinary proceedings. "What lord is come again?"

"Oh, sir, forgive me, but I'm just terrified to death. Your poor brother, sir, is in the west tower."

Leolin thought she meant Rupert, and uttered the name involuntarily as he rose from his seat in consternation little less than hers. Father Andrew took a pinch of snuff while he stared at her.

"Ah, no, sir; not Mr. Rupert. Not but what at first I thought it was he: but it's the poor dead lord, Guy. Ah, you'll believe me now, sir! I told it, years ago, that the lord's ghost appeared to me the very night of his burying, and I was bade hold my nonsense. I told you, father, and you only mocked at me—craving your pardon, and made fun of my eyesight. You may both believe me now."

"What is it that you are saying?" repeated Leolin, his fears relieved on the score of Rupert, but unable to comprehend a syllable, and wondering whether Bridget was suddenly attacked with insanity.

"There's the dead Lord of Pomeroy in the haunted room at this blessed moment, sir," she whispered: "I have seen him with my own eyes. It is said a troubled soul always comes out of purgatory on the anniversary of its doom, though it be for ages and ages after: and it is nine years ago to-night; you know it, sir."

Leolin Pomeroy, man of the world though he was, had been educated in superstition, and he rose from his seat in some discomfort. The father, on the contrary, looked very much inclined to laugh: perhaps he felt at home with ghosts and dead people.

"You must be out of your mind," spoke Leolin haughtily to the trembling Bridget.

"Ah no, sir. I have seen some one in the haunted room this week past, and I thought only that it was Mr. Rupert come home from his wanderings. I thought he might be hiding there. Of course it was too far off, and the light too dim for me to see the features, and I took it to be Mr. Rupert. To-night, my mistress, sitting alone in her room, saw it too; she, like me, feared it was Mr. Rupert. She said he ought to be warned of the risk he ran and she would go up and do it: she was shaking with apprehension for him, poor lady, just as I was. I got the keys for her, dodging Cox, who was near his key closet at first, and she went up there, and——"

"Mrs. Pomeroy!—gone up to the west wing!" interrupted Leolin.

"Into the west tower, sir. She would go alone, fearing that two of us might be seen. I stood at my nursery and watched. Suddenly I saw two hands thrust through the glass of the casement, and I

heard a shriek of terror. Before I had recovered myself to move or do anything, the same tall figure rose close to the window in the moonlight. Ah, sir, it was not Mr. Rupert—Father, don't look so at me !—it was the spirit of the Lord of Pomeroy."

Father Andrew rapped his snuff-box. "You have got far eyesight, Bridget, woman, to know a dead man's features all that way."

Bridget, between anger, fear, and excitement, broke into tears. "The moon shone full upon its face : don't you see, father, the night is almost as bright as day. Look at that curtainless window ; you might see to read small print at it."

"There's not a soul throughout the abbey, of you old retainers, but will let your superstitious nonsense get the upper hand of your discretion on the 17th of October. What should bring his spirit back again in the teeth of all the masses said for its repose ?"

"May I never be shriven when I am dying, then, if I did not see it to-night !" burst forth Bridget, in her haste and distress. "The peculiar lip was as plain to be seen as it ever was in life. And—you can't mistake a dead face, father. I am not the only one who has seen the lord since he died."

Leolin did not check her, as he certainly would at any other time. He was in a reverie : scared, if the truth must be told, just as much as was Bridget. Not, though, with ghostly fancies. How greatly he had all along hated these superstitious rumours of his brother's "coming again" he alone knew. Perhaps he could not, himself, have analysed the feeling prompting this aversion, for he certainly put no faith in the tales. No, what was stirring Leolin now, scaring him out of his presence of mind, was a very tangible and real fear—he believed that it must be *Rupert* who was in the west tower.

At this juncture the room door softly opened ; and Lady Anna Pomeroy came timidly in, her infant in her arms. *She* looked scared, partaking, it seemed, of the general discomfort. Her face was very pale ; her eyes, wandering around, rested on Bridget, in surprise at seeing her there. His wife's entrance served to break Leolin's unpleasant thoughts.

"What is it, Anna ?"

"There's something in the haunted room, and I am frightened," she began in a whisper : for Lady Anna, having her abode amidst these superstitious people, had not escaped infection herself; and, to call the room the "haunted room," was, to her, quite natural. "I happened to be alone with baby, and was standing with him at the window, when I heard the crash of glass opposite, and I saw what looked like two hands thrust out at the casement of the west tower. I was not alarmed : I only wondered who could have had the courage to go there at night ; and this night, of all others. In another minute I saw the outlines of some one inside, but I could not distinguish much, and then the room was lighted up with a pale

coloured flame, and a tall figure rose before the window. It looked —it looked like some one dead," she shivered.

"Anna!" reproachfully uttered Leolin.

"The face looked too white to be a living face," she resumed. "The pale flame, flashing out for a moment or two, lighted it up distinctly."

"That pale clear flame used to light up the room when the nun appeared," exclaimed Bridget. "I saw it myself once, my lady."

Leolin Pomeroy frowned angrily upon her, and made a gesture for silence. He drew his wife to his side to re-assure her, keeping his hand upon her waist. "It must have been one of the servants, Anna."

"It was not one of the servants. I saw the face distinctly: it was like no one I ever knew; there seemed something strange about its lip," she added, sinking her voice. "It was a white, corpse-like face: I say that I do not think it belonged to anyone living."

"No, my lady, that it did not," cried the undaunted Bridget. "But oh, sir, should not Mrs. Pomeroy be seen after?" she added to Leolin. "We are losing time, and she may just be dying of the terror."

"But—Mrs. Pomeroy is surely not there now?" cried Leolin; whose own perplexity had partly obscured his understanding.

"Oh, sir, yes; that's why I presumed to come to you; I did not choose to speak of this to the servants. It was she who shrieked; it was her hands that were flung out."

Of course Mrs. Pomeroy must be seen after at once. But, full of fears for his misguided brother Rupert, Leolin hesitated yet an instant. It would never do to betray *his* presence there.

"Will you go up with me, father?" he said in a low tone to the priest. "We had better go alone."

Father Andrew nodded a cheerful assent. Ghosts had no terrors for him; he was by far too fat and jolly: and the other fear, touching Rupert, had not rested with him. He believed that the whole thing had its rise in foundationless imaginings only, and that Mrs. Pomeroy must have got scared by the loneliness, once she found herself in the ill-omened room.

Carrying a light, he and Leolin proceeded alone to the haunted room, and were unmolested by sight or sound. Mrs. Pomeroy was lying as she had fallen, underneath the window, in a dead faint. Raising her between them, they laid her on the old velvet couch; and the movement served to bring her to her senses. She seized hold of them both as they stood over her; her wounded hands clasping their hands, as though she would never let them go again.

"Don't leave me, for the love of Heaven!"

"No, no," said Leolin, speaking softly in his compassion. "Have you been ill? What has alarmed you?"

"Is it gone?" she shuddered, glancing round. "In that place,

there," she continued in a faint voice, pointing to the nun's picture, but not daring to raise her eyes to it, "stood the apparition of my husband. I would rather die than see it again; than be in this room with it alone—alone!"

"Daughter, your fears must have deceived you."

"Father Andrew, do you think I have forgotten him? Can I forget his features, and his peculiar lip? He was little altered; his eyes were dull, and his face wore the hue of the grave."

"Did you truly see the hare-lip?" doubtingly spoke Leolin. "I think that must have been fancy."

"I saw it as truly and perfectly as ever I saw it in life. There were whispers at the time," she shuddered, "that he came again. There have been whispers since."

"It's a rare night for ghosts, this," cried the father, in his good-natured mockery, for he deemed it best for her not to treat it seriously. "The wind whirls round the abbey as if it owed it a grudge."

Leolin held the light so that its rays fell on every part of the small room. There was no possibility of any one's being concealed in it; neither was there a sign that any one had been in it save Mrs. Pomeroy and her imagination. He flashed it under the couch; he drew aside the old velvet curtain that was before the picture: the lovely features of the ill-fated nun stood out to view, with her upturned finger, and the lines of the dark prophecy. Leolin had wondered why Guy, during his lifetime, did not destroy that picture; he had wondered still more that Mrs. Pomeroy did not destroy it, with its miserable associations, when she reigned at the abbey after her husband's death: he was not aware that his brother George had chosen to let the west tower alone, and that his orders on the point were peremptory. Leolin himself had intended to consign the picture to the flames when he came into power, to put the west wing in habitable order, and to do away with the superstition if he could; he had planned many other innovations and improvements, to be effected as soon as he should be residing at the abbey. Alas, at the very onset of his arrival, he was dispossessed. And it had pleased the young lord's mother to leave things as they were.

Leolin let the curtain fall into its place again over the face. He carried the light to the next room and looked about; but there was neither sign nor symptom of anybody's presence, dead or living.

"Imagination, and nothing else," he whispered in the ear of Father Andrew. And he most sincerely hoped himself that it *was* imagination; that Rupert was not there.

They assisted Mrs. Pomeroy forward. She leaned heavily upon them; all strength seemed to have left her. A gust came in at the broken window and extinguished the light. She shrieked and shuddered.

"We can find our way in the moonlight," said the priest to her. "Make an effort to rally your strength. Do you know that your hands are bleeding, and must be attended to."

But meanwhile the news had spread; the very thing Leolin wished to avoid took place—the servants had become acquainted with the trouble. Three of the maids were lingering in the quadrangle for a gossip—for in truth, so numerous were the domestics at Pomeroy, they could but indulge in perpetual gossip to while away the time — when the light in the west tower struck upon their astonished eyes; the light carried by Leolin Pomeroy. They saw it being flashed about, to this side and that; they saw two figures moving within, and recognised one, round and jolly, for that of Father Andrew. One cannot keep marvels to oneself: it is not in human nature; this was indeed a marvel; and the women ran about in excitement, calling to their fellow-servants in covert whispers, and pointing out the light in the haunted casement. Bridget, not to be outdone, explained it—the ghost was there to-night. She had seen it, and her mistress had seen it; and her mistress, all so bravely, had gone up to—to—get speech of it, but had been, no doubt, overpowered with fright. Bridget, while she thought it was Rupert, would have been silent to martyrdom; but the ghost of the dead lord was legitimate property, she could not enlarge enough upon *him*.

"That we—that I could have been so deceived, madam!" murmured Bridget, as she bathed Mrs. Pomeroy's temples with Cologne water, when the latter had been conveyed to her room, laid upon the bed, and her hands attended to.

"Deceived?" repeated Mrs. Pomeroy.

"In thinking it was poor Mr. Rupert up there. As if he would venture home again!" And Alice Pomeroy only answered by a groan of pain.

"But their figures were as like as twin peas, when living, and the outline of their features too," pursued Bridget, who could have talked of the wondrous theme till the next morning. "Madam," she went on, sinking her voice lower, "I saw his lip all this way off."

Terror had left Mrs. Pomeroy in a sadly low and subdued state, but the words somewhat aroused her. How was she to know that anyone but herself had seen the startling sight? Bridget explained.

"It rose up as from the floor and stood right before the window in the moonlight. At the same time the room was momentarily lighted up from the inside, rendering him distinct and clear. My Lady Anna saw it also, madam, and it frightened her sadly."

"I wonder I did not die," gasped Mrs. Pomeroy. "I would rather die than see it again—and be alone with it. Bridget, I should like to be left for a few minutes with Father Andrew. Send to tell him."

Bridget was turning away in search of the priest, when a cry from her mistress called her back again.

"You are not going to leave me!" gasped Mrs. Pomeroy imploringly, grasping hold of Bridget's arm and sleeve. "Send, I said. Can I ever, think you, be left alone again?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

BRIDGET'S TALE.

MEANWHILE, during all this commotion, the Lady of Pomeroy and her sister-in-law, Joan, remained unconscious of it. Shut up in their room in the south tower, they neither saw nor heard aught to disturb them; nor, as yet, was any word brought to alarm them. The tea-tray had been brought in and they prepared to enjoy the simple refreshment after their day of fast.

It was while Joan was busying herself with the cups that they heard a sound as of the breaking of glass. Sybilla smiled. The conversation had been of the gloomiest, and she was pleased to seize on any little pretext to enliven it.

"One of them has dropped a glass of some kind," she said, alluding to the servants. "In carrying it through the cloisters, I suppose——"

"Hush, Sybilla! Listen!"

The Lady of Pomeroy looked up, slightly surprised at Joan's movements. The tea-pot which she was lifting, remained suspended in mid-air over the tray; her head was raised, her ear turned in the act of listening.

"What is it, Joan?"

For answer, Miss Pomeroy made a quick movement to enjoin silence. And for some moments both ladies listened attentively, one of them not knowing why or wherefore.

"I thought I heard a shriek," observed Joan, beginning to pour out the tea. "A prolonged shriek as from one in terror or pain."

"It must have been the wind, Joan. Or perhaps the breaker of the glass cried out over his mishap."

"I don't think it was the wind. The latter it may have been. Still, I say, it sounded like a real intense cry of pain. Go on with your story, Sybilla. What did you and George do when you saw that it was indeed one of those poisonous snakes? "I should not like to live in India," added Joan. "In the matter of snakes and such things I should be a rare coward."

Continuing to converse until tea was over, Joan left the room to pay a visit to Lady Anna. The wind whistled and howled as she went through the passages, almost as if it would shake the very foundations of the abbey. In the lower corridor, Joan disturbed a group of excited and frightened women and heard their theme of conversation—the wonderful event of the night. Confused,

dismayed, Joan's very blood seemed to freeze within her veins, as she listened. She made her way at once into the presence of Leolin.

Leolin had but then come in from his wife's chamber. Anna wanted re-assuring as much as anybody. The chess-board stood on the small table under the silver lamp, the men were just in the position that Leolin and Father Andrew had left them, the game remained unfinished.

"What is this horror that is running through the abbey?" whispered Joan, her dark face colourless. "What is it they are saying now?"

"That Guy is not at rest; that his spirit is abroad to-night," gloomily replied Leolin, who was not in the best of humours. "That is what they *say*."

"Has—he—appeared?" questioned Joan, her tone one that at another time Leolin might have laughed at. "To whom?"

"To Mrs. Pomeroy. She went into the west tower, and saw it standing against the picture: we found her senseless. Anna saw it from her rooms; it was at the casement then; and Bridget also. I tell you, Joan, I am only repeating what they say."

"They could not mistake it—Bridget and Mrs. Pomeroy?"

"Hardly—if they *did* see it. Other faces may be mistaken, but not Guy's."

Joan Pomeroy clasped her hands upon her chest in pain. "Leolin—I have felt—I have felt—that Guy was not at rest. Even this very evening when the wind was wailing and sighing round the abbey, it seemed to whisper that the dead were abroad; I remarked it to Sybilla. And I thought of Guy, of poor Guy. They were too true, the tales that were told of his appearing after his death."

"Nonsense, Joan. You are old enough to have lived down that superstition of yours. I confess there's something in the affair to-night that I don't understand: but, a ghost!—nonsense!"

Joan had drawn one of the green velvet chairs, the carving of its dark frame so beautiful, nearer her brother. She sat looking at him.

"I wish Father Andrew was here!" she mechanically said, following out her own troubled thoughts.

"Father Andrew is with Mrs. Pomeroy. He intended to stay with her until Norris came—who could not be found at once. Her hands are cut badly, I fancy."

"Leolin, you speak in riddles," cried Miss Pomeroy, who in her perplexity had not taken in the sense of all Leolin had said. "What has she done to her hands?"

"Don't you know? She flung them, in her terror, through the panes of glass in the haunted room; to attract attention and bring help."

"It is a riddle still. What could have taken her—*her*—to the haunted room?"

"Bridget offered a curious explanation—that movements had been seen in the west tower: and they concluded, both she and her mistress, that it was Rupert."

"Why, Rupert is in bed and asleep," returned Joan, imperfectly comprehending yet. "What did she think would take him to the west tower? And why should Mrs. Pomeroy be looking after Rupert?"

"Joan! Not the boy. Rupert the wanderer."

Joan Pomeroy gazed at her brother, a darker shade passing over her face when she realised the sense of the words. A lively fear seized upon her.

"It could not be Rupert. *Could* it, Leolin?"

"No, no; he would not be so mad. Besides, how could he get up to the west wing? The keys were in their places. Bridget fetched them from thence for Mrs. Pomeroy, that she might go up."

Joan threw back her head in haughty displeasure.

"*She* went up! What induced her to go? Had she not done enough evil and entailed enough evil by stealthily creeping up nine years ago? Why did she do it, Leolin?"

"You have not understood me, Joan. She saw, or fancied she saw someone moving within the room, and she feared it might be Rupert; Bridget no doubt confirming her in the thought; and she went up to warn him of the risk he was running. I believe her motive for once was a good one."

"And ——? Go on, please."

"She found no sign of Rupert; but she saw, as she says, *Guy*. Frightened beyond control, she dashed her hands through the casement, and screamed to attract notice to her from below. Bridget was on the watch; she came here to me with the tale, and I went up with Father Andrew."

"And—did you see anything?" shivered Joan.

"Yes. We saw Mrs. Pomeroy lying in a fainting fit under the broken casement, her hands bleeding."

"I meant anything else, Leolin?"

"There could have been nothing else to see."

But matters could not remain, even for the night, as they were. The terrified servants must be appeased if possible, the west wing must be locked up again. Joan passed on to Lady Anna, Leolin went below to the servants, who were hanging about. He bade them accompany him into the west wing to examine the rooms, previous to shutting them up. But the superstitious crew hung back, each one thinking that *he* would not be of the expedition. Leolin was angered.

"There are enough of you," cried he, sarcastically—"are you afraid to venture in numbers? Are *you* afraid, Jeffs?—an old man, like you!"

"No, no sir; I'll go for one," replied Jeffs. "It shan't be said that the oldest retainer of the family, Jerome excepted, was afraid of the lord he served, dead or living." But Jeffs did not speak with the greatest possible amount of personal courage. He had been coachman to the Pomeroys for three generations. First to the old lord; then to the ill-fated Guy, at whose marriage he had nearly lost his life; then, during his brief reign, to Leolin; and now to the young child, Rupert. Jeffs condescended to serve no less a personage of the family than the reigning lord: it was the way of the Pomeroys; certain of the retainers passed from lord to lord, as by hereditary right. But this did not render Jeffs any more brave to-night. Jeffs was sixty years of age, if he was a day, therefore it was altogether unreasonable of Jeffs to be afraid of ghosts. Perhaps Jeffs felt it so, for he put on a careless manner, took a light to lead the way, went a few paces with a jaunty step, and then turned round and asked who was coming with him.

Example is contagious. Several of them now pressed after Jeffs, Bridget and two or three of the other maids amid them. Cox came bustling up: he had been in his key closet.

"The keys of the west wing are not there, sir," he observed to Leolin.

"No. And, by the way, I wonder where the keys are?" added Leolin—"whether Mrs. Pomeroy brought them down with her? Go you up and wait for me in the first room: I will ask Mrs. Pomeroy."

They moved forward, bearing several lights, huddling close to one another, and talking in an undertone. Passing through the north tower, they came to a halt in the first room of the west wing, as ordered. Jeffs threw his light around, to make sure nothing uncanny was there. The wind howled dismally, shaking the panes.

"I say, Jeffs, does Mr. Leolin think anybody's concealed in these rooms?" asked Markham, one of the footmen.

"The blessed patron saint of the Pomeroys only knows!" responded Jeffs. "He may fear somebody has been putting a trick upon Mrs. Pomeroy."

"Such nonsense! — as if he could think that!" dissented Bridget. "As if any mortal body could get through locked rooms, and rooms that have been locked up for years!"

"Bridget, what did it look like?"

"Why, it looked—exactly as the lord used to look when he was among us: you may just think back upon him at any time that your memory serves. Just so his spirit looked to-night—save that his face was whiter and more ghastly. I was the first to see him, you know," added Bridget, proud of being able to say as much. "It was the very night he was buried; not many hours after the funeral. He looked then as he looks to-night."

"Not with the shattered face?" shuddered a questioner. "What a face it was! Nobody dared lift the cloth to look at that, as he lay dead."

Bridget shook her head. "Spirits don't re-appear with the marks of what sends them out of the world, but as they were when they moved about in it. Witness the poor nun. When was she ever seen but in the full beauty of her face and form; beautiful as they had been before she killed herself—and was she not picked up out of the court-yard a dreadful sight to look upon, and put into her grave as such? But her spirit came back perfect: and so it is with the Lord of Pomeroy."

"Tell us that tale again, Bridget—about your seeing him the night of the funeral."

"It was this," said Bridget, nothing loath. "You remember when the lord lay in state, how the people came from miles round to see him, and then to attend his funeral. Not a soul, poor or rich, ill or well, missed it, or would miss it, except my sister, poor Avice, who died not so very long after. She was ill then, and near her time besides, and she didn't want to come; her husband didn't want her to come; she said that if she saw the lord in that shattered state, she should never get him out of her mind. Sick folks are fanciful, you know."

"She would not have seen anything amiss. She need not have lifted the cloth from his face."

"Well, she was afraid; and come she wouldn't. But she made me promise to go to her when the funeral was over, and tell her about it, that she might appear as wise as her neighbours—for she didn't mean to let it be known abroad that she did not go."

"It was a brave funeral!"

"Never a braver. More crowded even than the old lord's had been: the death was unusual, you see, and it brought the people from far and wide. You couldn't get into the chapel for the throng; half of them had to kneel outside. And the priests! such a many! Father Andrew was nobody among 'em. Well, I did not forget my promise to Avice; and at dusk I started. It was a squally, gloomy night: I wrapped my black shawl well round me, and put my best foot first, to get back soon and relieve the lady's-maid, Theresa, who had taken charge to watch the baby for me while she slept—little Miss Mary; and I chose the field way, simpleton that I was, because it was a bit nearer. You know those hay-stacks in the hollow?"

Bridget had made a pause before the last few words, and changed her tone to one of mysterious awe. Her listeners gathered more closely round her, their lights flaring on the dark wainscoting of the room.

"Some rain began to fall just as I got to the haystacks—there were fewer of them that year than this; and I looked up at the sky all round, wondering whether it was going to be a heavy shower, for I

did not want to spoil my new mourning. As I turned my face forward again, I saw a figure close to me: where it had come from, unless it rose up out of the earth, I could not tell: it was—it was—— Hark! what's that?" shrieked out Bridget.

They crossed themselves and shuddered, one and all. Some kind of hollow noise was certainly heard from the direction of the west tower.

"It was nothing but the wind," cried Cox, who despised the extreme superstition of his fellows. "How fanciful you are!"

"Yes, yes, it was the wind," put in Jeffs. "Perhaps a door slammed. Go on with your tale, Bridget."—For this same tale had its fascinations for the audience, though most of them had heard it many a time before.

"Where was I?" commented Bridget. "Oh—just where the figure had risen up before me. It was that of the poor dead lord, whom we had just been putting into his grave. I saw him plainly. I saw his dead looking eyes and his hare lip, and then I seized hold of the haystack and pushed my face into it, and screamed out ten thousand murders. Brill heard me in his cottage, a field and a half off, and came to me."

"And the apparition. Where did it go?"

"How can I tell? It vanished as it came. Brill got me home to the abbey—and it was all hushed up. I have never gone by those haystacks at dark since by myself, and I never will go."

"One of the keeper's boys saw him too," interposed Jeffs, in a whisper. "I think it was that same night. The boy was coming through the hollow, and there stood the lord against the field gate. The dog would not go past, and trembled like anything when they got him by, after the thing had vanished. Those dumb animals have a mortal dread of such; worse than we have. Other people saw him too."

"Ay, ay," put in Bridget again, "the lord has never been at rest. And he never will be until—but I am afraid to say it."

"To say what? There's nobody here but ourselves, Bridget."

"Well, then, as long as he, who sent him out of the world, lives in it. When Mr. Rupert's gone to join him, then the lord's poor troubled spirit will be laid."

A strange and startling interruption came. Jeffs, not feeling entirely re-assured as to the noise they had heard, had kept his face turned to the rooms whence it came, the doors of which stood open, when he saw, or thought he saw, a figure moving towards them. The man's heart leaped into his mouth; his hair rose up on end. Jeffs did not speak, but he touched some of the rest, and pointed.

Through the moonlight rays that fell slanting on the floors, it was gliding towards them, a tall, ghastly figure of towering height, with a glazed, livid face. Petrified, tongue-tied, they stood there, gazing in horror, heart and impulse alike frozen; when with a rush and a

bang, the only open door now intervening between it and them suddenly dashed itself to.

Helter-skelter, pêle-mêle, down stairs they rushed, the brave Jeffs and his torch foremost in the company, and Bridget in the midst, laying hold of as many strange garments as she had hands for. Father Andrew met them in the cloisters. Mrs. Pomeroy could not tell what she had done with the keys.

The priest rated them soundly. He told Jeffs he ought to be ashamed of himself for an old simpleton, and he insisted upon their returning to lock the doors and bring away the keys, which must be somewhere up there.

No, not for a thousand worlds! Not even in obedience to his reverence, would they again encounter the ghost of the Lord of Pomeroy.

The priest saw he must go himself, if anything was to be done. Snatching the light from Jeffs, he went on rapidly, bidding them follow him. Of course it is well known that a ghost dare not venture near a priest, especially one who keeps a sacred relic in his pocket, as it was supposed the Father kept, and they scrambled after him. Bridget did not stay behind. Say what you will, there is a fascination in ghosts, and nobody can deny it.

"You muffs! you geese!" reproachfully spoke the Father, striding on and throwing the light of the torch round the several rooms as he passed through them, disclosing nothing but tranquillity and emptiness. "What is there to be afraid of? I would not have these poltroons of brains, of yours, to be made a cardinal to morrow."

"Father"—and you may be sure it was Bridget who spoke—"if there was nothing here, what has shut all the doors? They were open before?"

"What? Why the wind."

"Oh, but just think, Father—if the wind slams one door, it would not slam a dozen in succession," objected the persistent Bridget.

On went the Father with as quick a step as his size allowed; very scornful was he over their superstitious folly. The rooms were perfectly empty; the haunted room, when they gained it, looked as though it had not been disturbed for ages—save that the keys were lying on the faded velvet settee.

"Now then," cried the priest, swaying his light about, "are you convinced there's nothing here; and that there has been nothing? The lord's ghost indeed! just as much as yours; and you are not melted into ghosts yet. Jeffs, my man, I'd cover up my eyes with smoked spectacles if mine served me as yours are serving you."

Jeffs shook his obstinate old head. "All the same, your reverence, I *saw* it. The rest saw it."

"Saw a mopstick," scoffed the priest.

He marshalled them before him, locking every door in succession

with his own hand; locking up the north tower last of all. With an admonition not to be so silly again, the priest then dismissed the servants on their several ways, and proceeded to the room where he had been disturbed at chess. Leolin entered it at the same moment.

"Shall we finish our game?" asked the Father equably, moving to the chess-table.

"Father, what *is* this trouble that is disturbing the peace of the abbey?" cried Leolin passionately, ignoring the priest's proposal.

"Moonshine," quietly replied Father Andrew. "There never was such an ignorant, superstitious set of servants as yours. Their folly would upset the gravity of a colony of martyrs."

"I know it has upset me," remarked Leolin, wiping his brow.

Father Andrew looked at him in surprise, hardly knowing how to take the avowal.

"Upset you, my son!" he repeated, suppressing a laugh. "Has the ghost story infected you?"

"Ghost!" retorted Leolin, with pain. "It is not that. Did you not understand, Father? I thought it was *Rupert* there: that he had come back again. I surely thought it. I am not altogether easy yet."

"Now look here," said the priest: "you are tormenting yourself unnecessarily. There's neither rhyme nor reason in such a fancy as that. There can't be. For my part, I'd sooner believe in the ghost than the other notion; I would—of the two; it's too impossible. Rupert Pomeroy would no more dare to venture here; here, to the abbey; than he would put himself voluntarily into a lion's mouth. Rest assured of that, my son."

Leolin drew a sigh of relief. It was only at moments that the fear recurred to him: with the priest, his common sense told him that it was well-nigh impossible.

"And here are the keys," said the priest, depositing the large bunch upon a black marble console. "I have locked all the rooms securely up."

Leolin took the keys. He intended to keep them himself for the future, instead of returning them to Cox the custodian.

(*To be continued.*)

MARY LAMB.

IT was past the middle of the eighteenth century. The world of politics was looking uneasily towards America, where dark clouds were rising above the horizon; the world of fashion was full of the newest thing in caps, which were worn by everyone; the world of literature was quivering with the last torrent of eloquence that had poured from the lips of Burke, or was gazing into the last stately, slow-flowing stream of prose, that had glided from the pen of Johnson. But none of these things were much talked of, except perhaps, sometimes, when friends came in of an evening; or now and then, when the father, having got up a little earlier, could linger five minutes at the breakfast table to tell his wife and children the news.

None of these things were much talked of in the house of Mr. Lamb, the clerk, who lived in Crown Office Road, for there they had all quite enough to do in thinking, and counting, how they could make both ends meet. The American war was making everything very dear; it cost more each year to feed and dress the boys and girls; the health of the mother, the mistress of the household, was already beginning to grow weak and variable; the whole family had to learn what it means to battle with the hardest and most prosaic things of life, and very soon the heaviest of the struggle began to fall to the lot of Mary, the elder daughter.

We can easily look into a picture of Mary Lamb's girlhood. There was much real manual work, for the limited income of the clerk's calling only allowed of one servant in the family, and the daughter of the house had to supplement a good deal the damsel's labours, in the way of dusting china, and polishing best furniture, and manufacturing extra dainties out of very little that was dainty, when the family gave a small supper party. There was a large share of plain sewing, and Mary, though she may not at the time quite have liked so much of it, nevertheless profited by the apprenticeship, and became one of the most delicate stitchers that ever handled a needle, and in after life wrote words on the subject that should be ever dear to womanhood.

But neither cooking nor hemming could keep Mary from reading; if a girl is fond of it, not a whole armoury of brooms and saucepans, not piles of unmade linen, ever can. Mary stole half an hour for reading of a morning, while all the house was asleep, and the town sparrows twittered a low accompaniment to her thoughts, as she sat at her open window with her book. She stole half an hour for reading of an evening, while talk was going on in the parlour, but her brain was fastened on the page before her. She stole many ten minutes for reading in the day-time, between the laying down of the needle and the taking up of the rolling-pin. This reading was of a

very desultory kind; sometimes it was a brother's school-book, sometimes it was a volume of poetry begged from a friend who had more money for satisfying literary tastes than the clerk's daughter; sometimes it was a stray novel of Charlotte Smith. But whatever the author might be, his words fell into good soil, that made them bring forth the best fruit they could, when they entered the mind of Mary Lamb. She must have often met with thoughts and expressions, in her indiscriminate reading, which were hardly fitted for a young girl's eyes, but they passed away from her pure fancy, like ill scents from mountain air. Her quick memory retained the music of each poet's verse so that it rang in her brain for years; in after days her brother attributed much of the charm that hung around her to this early varied reading.

But there was a better thing in Mary Lamb's girlhood than books or fine needlework, and that better thing was love. Love for the father whose comfort was the first care of the little household, love for the pale fading mother, love most of all for Charles, the youngest child of the family. Great was the joy for Mary, when for a brief moment, as a grand nursery treat, they laid the baby brother in her childish arms; great was her joy when he could trot at her side, and prattling, hold her hand; great was her joy when first she welcomed home the school-boy; but, highest joy of all, when the day came for her to realize the truth, that her plaything and her darling had grown into the friend, on whose brave heart her own might lean in cloud and sunshine.

There is another feature in Mary Lamb's youth, which should be noticed, as it coloured the habits of her whole life, but which belongs rather to the period at which she was born than to herself. The people of England were a much more sociable people in those days than they are now, and, of all classes, none was more universally sociable than the middle class, to which the Lambs belonged. There was always going on between the families of neighbours in this rank in London and in other towns a constant exchange of small courtesies; the daughters were dropping in upon each other at all hours with fresh bits of gossip, or new patterns in wool-work; the fathers spent many a convivial hour together at the tavern, with the cosy parlour, across the way; the mothers could not so much as settle about the colour of a new dress without consulting a sister matron; the old folks had their frequent whist tables, the young ones their little impromptu dances, which ended with negus and sandwiches, and a walk home by star-light, when, as the well-cloaked maiden hung upon the arm of her attendant cavalier, a mild touch of flirtation no doubt always beguiled the way.

Thus it came to pass that Mary Lamb's girlhood, with all its household work and all its reading, and all that family love which bound her to her own fire-side more closely than is usual at her age, was spent very much in society, and that in after years her home never

looked so home-like to her as when it was filled with genial faces and voices. The incessant intercourse between neighbours, which we have just spoken of, made every one in those days more or less of a ready talker, and a clever girl like Mary Lamb naturally soon became a good one.

Time went on, and Mary, the sweet bud, opened into a yet sweeter flower. She was no great beauty that a sculptor would have chosen for a model, and yet she had a face which, from its charm of expression, the eye loved to rest upon, even as it loves to rest on running water. No doubt some man would soon have found out the treasure that the clerk's household had within it, and have borne her away to be what God had created her to be, a home queen, if it had not been that the fatal shadow that was to cloud her whole life began so early to hang around her: it troubled the serene depths of her eyes, it thrilled in melancholy cadences in her voice, it showed itself in drooping head and languid step; but still those who loved her seem never to have caught a glimpse of the terrible truth. We shrink from the attempt to look into that once happy family group on the day when that truth burst in such sudden and awful horror upon them. There are some things too sad for the eye or the mind to dwell upon; the mother lay dead, and the tender hand that had so long soothed her in her weakness with its fond ministries had dealt the blow which killed her—a fit of raving madness had, all at once, come upon the daughter.

Mary Lamb was put under gentle restraint, and skilful medical treatment and watchful care soon restored entirely her reason, but the doctors said that the fearful disease would very likely return in paroxysms: and now it was that the life of Charles Lamb wove itself into the life of his sister, and that their story became one of the most beautiful and touching stories in the whole history of humanity.

Charles Lamb was, at this period, a young clerk, with talents that already began to show a strong inclination to struggle beyond the desk at which he sat. He had a fancy that sparkled over in lively puns and quaint sayings, at gay supper parties where, if truth must be told, the revels were prolonged somewhat beyond the convivial, and which broke forth into airy fireworks of wit that often found their way into print. He had genial sympathies that woke into music even at the sight of a little friendless chimney-sweep; he had a heart that had already warm chambers in it prepared for wife and children. There was a woman whom he loved; that Alice W., who throughout his life was to float before his soul's eyes—a dear memory, a radiant ideal. If ever there was a man who would have found a breadth of all joy, a perfecting of all noble things that were in him, a softening and a deepening of all his finer feelings in domestic life, it was Charles Lamb; and yet, for the dear love he bore his sister Mary, this man resolved calmly to forego everything that is sweetest in the names of husband and father.

Charles Lamb lost no time in putting into execution the generous resolution he had made. He arranged his bachelor dwelling so that it might receive a lady; he took Mary from the house of the doctor with whom she was living; he surrounded her with every little comfort and amusement his love could devise; he watched over her health as tenderly as if he had been a woman. But his sister was not the only object that demanded the young man's care and love; his widowed father must have a share of both. Every evening he went to the old man's house, to bring him news and cheerful talk, and play with him his beloved game of cribbage. We must remember that the man who thus devoted himself to his family was no plodding clerk whose mind was one great book of figures, but a man who had in him more than the full share of quicksilver usually belonging to genius, whose nerves thrilled at a rough sound, or un lovely sight, like delicate strings at a rude touch. When we look at the story of Charles Lamb, let it never be said that a man of intellect cannot be a man of home too.

We know from certain papers in "Elia" (for, though facts in them are doubtless often altered and exaggerated, those papers are most assuredly pictures cut out of Charles Lamb's own life) what the history of the brother and sister was like when they first began to live together. There were frequent visits to the theatre, when Mary, terrified at the crowd which carried her almost off her legs, yet eager for the rich intellectual treat which a play then was, struggled up the gallery stairs at her brother's side. The pair could afford no more aristocratic seat than the gallery, and, as she gazed down upon Viola, or Katharine, given by some great actress of the day, quite forgot that she was not sitting among duchesses and countesses. There were the little excursions into the country, when Mary carried on her arm the basket she herself had packed with simple dainties, and when the two, as they rambled along some new field walks, appeared to themselves, in their Londoners' fancy, to be almost notable discoverers. There were trips to the sea, when they sailed in the rickety old tub of a packet, and Mary felt an almost child-like joy as the fresh breezes played around her, and Charles found so much that was humorous and strange in his fellow-travellers. There was the bringing home by Charles of some rare folio, which he had coveted for months, and which he had denied himself necessary comforts to possess, and the sitting up half the night, while he gloated over his new treasure, and Mary's skilful fingers arranged, and pasted in the scattered pages. It was a free life, a life full of mutual love, and small pleasurable excitements. A life of little money, but a great deal of joy.

After a time, the writings of "Elia" began to make the clerk of the India house (such was the office held by Charles Lamb) known in the literary world. Authors of all sorts of books wanted to know him, and tried to get introduced to him, and the brother and

sister's little parlour was filled with men whose thoughts went out into all lands. Mary Lamb, with her quick intelligence, her varied reading, and her sympathetic nature, was exactly the woman to be the mistress of a house where such men met together. Let us catch a glimpse of her room on one of those evenings when she was at her happiest and proudest.

There is to be a little supper party to-night, and the lady of the house is dressed, and hovering round the table, putting a last touch to everything. How deftly her fingers move about; it is as if a fairy had been here; it has been but the work of five minutes, and yet it seems as if a sudden light had come into the sparkle of the glass, and the glitter of the silver. But though she has thus a power of creating brightness, everything about herself is soft and subdued. Her dress is a mixture of delicate grey and lilac tints; her white cap is adorned with but one sober bow; the bands of her hair, just flecked with silver, rest lightly on her brow; her face is calm and thoughtful, but the eyes are a little sad. They begin to smile, however, and so do her lips, when a gentleman enters, and stands beside her. There is a family likeness between their features, but he is much more decidedly handsome, and there is a restlessness in his movements which is foreign to hers. How tender and caressing the inflections of his voice are as he speaks to her; it is always so when Charles Lamb is speaking to Mary.

And now the guests begin to arrive. Mary is a good talker, as has before been said, but she is a better listener—that quality so dear to man in woman. These men all know this, and pour into her ear their thoughts and feelings about any subject that interests them. How the warm intelligence in her face keeps time, as it were, to their words. Charles Lamb is always a little shy at first in company, as we can see from a little awkwardness in his movements, and hear in the increase of his stammering—that defect under which he has always laboured; but, as he gets carried away by the conversation, he grows more at his ease, and puns and merry conceits leap from his lips. But who is he standing on the hearth-rug? He to whom all eyes turn as he speaks; he with the brow of thought, the glance of fire; he whose face tells of struggles, yet of victory won. On his lips commonplace things become music, and what is high and mysterious is simple; his rich, ready language turns a subject a thousand ways in a minute. The worst of it is, however, that he talks through everything; talks while fresh guests enter, at the risk of being rude; talks while others, who think they should like to have their say in their turn, stand by, bursting to go off like so many rockets; talks while the hot dishes that have come up for supper cool upon the table, and yet they cannot choose but listen to Coleridge. There are others here besides him, only we have not space to dwell upon them; there are two poets talking together, one whom we cannot love, even with all the melody of his verse, and all his respectability, and one whose music just now is ring-

ing through the land: these are Rogers and Barry Cornwall. And there is a man with a keen, observant face, who is listening to every one and putting in a shrewd word here and there; this is he who in ripe old age is to enlighten those of latter days about these giants of the past, with whom he lived in daily communion—this is Crabbe Robinson. But the lights grow dim, the voice even of Coleridge grows faint, and that fair company fades from our sight.

But there were some sad hours for Mary. After a lonely evening, the sister would sometimes go to bed with a sad misgiving at her heart; by-and-by she would be awakened by the sound of a heavy, unsteady step on the stairs, and of a hand grasping with an uncertain touch for the handle of the door next her own. Then what sobs must have broken from her, what trembling prayers must have risen from her heart for the man whose genius was charming the whole educated world, the man whose sympathies were so tender that they were stirred by the thought of the children of the poor, who had never known the baby pleasures of their age, the man whose life had been one long act of self-devotion, had let himself to-night be made the slave of intemperance. We speak gently of the faults of such a man; we had rather not dwell upon them, but we cannot deny this failing in him, and the acknowledgment of the fact brings to us all a word of salutary warning, which says: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Other cruel trials for Mary Lamb were the seasons when she knew that a paroxysm of the terrible disease, from which throughout her life she suffered from time to time, was at hand; she always could tell from her own bodily feelings when one of these was near, and she then gave warning of it to those around her. Her brother's love was, however, still her strong and never-failing support even in such awful moments as these. He would take her by the hand and lead her gently, and with all tender reverence, to the house where she remained in mild confinement, and carefully watched over till the attack was ended. A friend who happened to meet the brother and sister on one of these sad occasions said that he never saw a more touching sight; they were walking hand in hand, and both were weeping bitterly.

Time went on, the face of Mary Lamb grew lined and faded, but still her own intellect, and the society of congenial friends, brought her cheery light, and still her brother's love shone on for her unchanged. At length the heaviest blow of her life fell upon her: Charles was taken away from her side. It was God's will she should remain upon earth for several desolate years after he was gone; it was God's will, and she bore it meekly and bravely; but at last a Father's whisper called her too away.

ALICE KING.

THE ILFRACOMBE BOATMAN.

By the Author of "The Lady Shakerlye," "The Exiles of St. Germain," etc.

"FRIGHTENED at that! No, sir, nor likely to be either. I never was really frightened but once in my life!"

"Only frightened once in your life! Come then, captain, tell us all about it? it must have been a rare fright to last you all your life."

"Was it a ghost?" added the brother of the last speaker.

"No, Master Alfred, it was no ghost; I don't believe in ghostesses myself."

"Well, tell us all about it," repeated William Sinclair.

"But I thought you young gentlemen wanted me to take you out fishing?" replied the old boatman, commonly called Captain Abbott.

"So we did; but the sun is so hot now, and you said we should not catch much as the wind was east; so we would much rather hear what frightened you, and go out fishing another time."

"Yes; in the evening," chimed in Alfred Sinclair. "When the sun has gone down; and the wind may have changed from the east, by then, you know, captain."

"Very like it may, sir; often does just before sunset. Now, if you young gentlemen like to do so, I'll row you across the harbour to Rapparee Cove, and we can sit in the shade there, and I'll mend my nets a bit, whilst I spin a yarn for you."

"We'll row and you steer," exclaimed the two brothers, jumping into the boat and taking the oars. "What is it called Rapparee Cove for?"

"Can't say, sir; unless it be that smuggling used to be carried on here; it's a convenient place to run a boat in, you see. Some Spanish ships were lost on the rocks here years ago, and many a gold doubloon found its way into Ilfracombe from them. Mind your oar, Mr. Alfred, here we are. Now I'll make the boat fast and bring my nets—as nice a place to spend an hour or so, to my thinking, as need be. What do you say, sir?" said Abbott, appealing to the elder brother.

"I think it's the jolliest place I ever saw, captain, with these beautiful cliffs at our back, and all those rocks running out into the sea. And now, captain, for your story," said William, throwing himself on the dry warm sand near Abbott, and shading his eyes with his hat, whilst Alfred seated himself on a large stone on the other side of the sailor, and commenced shying pebbles into the water.

"I've been thinking, young gentlemen, I can't tell you what frightened me without telling you a good bit of my early life."

"All the better," said the two brothers. "All the better. Now begin, as the story books always do, with 'Once upon a time.'"

Abbott took off his hat and wiped his face with his handkerchief several times: he was a fine looking fellow, in his blue guernsey and bare throat, and dark curly hair well streaked with grey.

"I was born at Clovelly yonder," he began, "and lived there the first twelve or fourteen years of my life. You can see the furtherest point there away to the left; the prettiest place in England, to my thinking. We moved from Clovelly to Ilfracombe. My father was a carpenter, and I worked with him when I wasn't going off to sea. When I was about eighteen, I went to Squire Bassett as carpenter, but I still lived at home, and walked backwards and forwards night and morning if I didn't get by water. I was the only child they ever had, and my poor mother made a deal of me. She had never the best of health; I remember her being very hearty, but she was a good woman and a good mother to me.

"I'm sorry for any lad who hasn't a good mother. No one can be what a mother is to a lad. The thought of her keeps him from many a hurtful thing; he wouldn't like to vex her, or he would be ashamed of her knowing, when he would not so much mind his father. I owe a good deal to my mother, I'm certain sure of that. All the comfortable things a mother does to help to keep a son's heart soft and loving to her—for we're all more or less selfish—you know. Well, my father died when I was just turned twenty, and before I was twenty-one I had begun to keep company with a girl that had been a time at Squire Bassett's, but afterwards she came into the town here, as her aunt set up a lodging house, and she was to help her.

"Visitors had begun to find out this place was pleasant to come to even then: they would come from London, and the gentry from the country would come for a few weeks to get some fresh air and sea bathing—nothing like what it is now-a-days, but still there was a few. I had kept company a good bit before I liked to tell my mother (a bad sign, young gentlemen); but one day some neighbour let out to her about me and Susan walking together: so in the evening, when I came back from work, and she was getting supper ready—she always waited for me, let me be ever so late—she said, 'My boy, is Susan Turner anything to you?' I laughed a bit, and leant back in my chair and said, 'What little bird has told you that, eh mother?'

"Well, she got up and came behind me, and took my face in her two hands and kissed me many times. 'Jem,' she said, 'I'd like you to have a good wife, and she should be as my own daughter. I could not love anyone so well as my own boy, except his wife, if she was a good wife to him: but, oh, Jem, mind what you're doing, and don't do what you may repent of, once and for ever.'

"I did not like to say much, and mother speaking in that kind way,

and not flying out about Susan as many mothers would when they didn't approve, kept me from being vexed with her.

"'You'll not leave me, Jem, if you do marry?' she said, 'will you? My health's never good you know, and I'd like this to be your home so long as I live.' Father had put a bit of money by, but it was all hers, and I'd never thought of leaving her, so I said, 'No, mother, I'll not leave you. I'll always be your son, even if I have a wife.'

"'You'll promise me that?' she said.

"'Yes, mother, I promise,' I said. 'I promise willingly.'

"'Thank you, my boy,' she answered, and again she put her thin hands on my head and kissed me. 'God bless you, Jem; and may He guide you in your choice, and keep you in all your ways.'

"She never said a word about me not having told her, and she never said she didn't like Susan, you see, so I could not but feel a bit vexed with myself for never having taken counsel with mother, or let her know what I was thinking about.

"Well, we went on, Susan and me, keeping company some three years, and then I thought it was time we should think of marrying. My work was very regular, chiefly carpentering, and my wages good.

"Well, I asked Susan about our settling, but she was quite set on having a house of her own, and that I could not promise. 'Mother will be as good as your own mother could have been,' I said, 'and there's two sitting rooms—one will be yours, Susan, and all your own things in it.' No; she wasn't pleased, and I wasn't, and we walked home rather put out with each other: and as we came near the nursery gardens beyond the church, we met the new upholsterer, Mr. Albert Strong, smoking like a chimney, and he took off his hat in a free-and-easy way to Susan. I didn't like it; and when he had gone on, says I, 'You know that young man, Susan!'

"'Know him! of course I do. I should think everyone knows him by this time—most genteel he is, and taken such a good shop in High Street—he comes from London.'

"The next time I met this Mr. Albert Strong was a Sunday afternoon, and to my surprise Susan was with him, and him smoking all the time. She coloured up a bit, and seemed vexed at meeting me, for she had sent me word she could not walk, as her aunt had lodgers and wanted her in that day: and it was not a likely part of the place for me to be too. However, she came forward and said aunt had let her go at last: it was a shame, such a lovely evening, to stay in the house, and Mr. Strong had escorted her till she could meet me.

"'Whatever made you think of looking for me on the Torr?' said I, feeling uncomfortable.

"'Do you think you're so small one can't see you?' says she, laughing; and I was nigh a foot higher than Mr. Strong, so if she had been looking out for me, no doubt she might have seen me from the hill; and, perhaps, I ought not to have suspected anything. We

walked on a bit together, and then somehow I thought he made a sign to Susan, and once more I felt uncomfortable and longed to knock him down. I've often wished I had then; but he took his leave immediately after, and I began to feel a little better.

"'Very genteel he's dressed, isn't he?' said Susan, as soon as he was out of hearing.

"'Genteel is it? Oh, I didn't know,' I said. 'I thought his coat must have been cut out of a remnant; he couldn't button it after a good dinner, I'll be bound.'

"Such a thing as it was! blue cloth and brass buttons, and small tails behind.

"'And his hair is brushed so very genteel,' she continued, 'and smells so sweet.'

"So we went on and she seemed as if she would only talk that way. I could not get her to be grave, or think about the house; not that evening, nor any time we were together; she never let me begin about our settling or anything serious, if she could help it; and one day, about a month after that walk, I said I thought she had something on her mind—was her aunt good to her?

"'Oh yes,' she said, 'everybody was better to her than she deserved.'

"'Well, come home with me this evening,' I said, 'and have tea with us and see what thee'lt say to the house; it's a long time, Susan, since thee've been to see mother.' 'I can't, I can't,' she said, 'don't ask me; not to-night, James, not to-night.' With that, she burst into tears, and turning from me—we were just passing her aunt's house at the time—she waved her hand, and ran in.

"That was our last walk together.

"Next morning I could not go up very early for I had a particular job to finish, but just before dinner I ran off to her aunt's. 'Susan's not in,' she said. 'Not in,' I repeated; 'where is she gone?'

"'Oh, I suppose a bit of shopping or something,' she said; 'I can't rightly say.' So I went round home the other way, and passed Mr. Strong's smart shop; the blinds was all closed, but there was a notice that a new and startling investment was expected from London on the following Saturday, which would be ready for inspection on Monday next. I went home, and had my dinner, and back to my work till about five o'clock: and about five mother came to me in the shop and put her hand on my arm, and said, looking as kind and pitiful as ever woman did: 'Jem, dear, have you seen Susan to-day?'

"'No, mother,' says I, turning sharp; 'what's the matter?'

"'Why, her aunt's come to see after her, she's not been in since morning, Jem, and——'

"'And what, mother?' I said, feeling scared like.

"'Her best clothes are gone, and Mrs. Hobbs has heard she was seen early to-day on the road to Lee.'

"'What should take Susan to Lee?'

"'Well, James Abbott,' said her aunt—who had followed my mother

and was just outside the door, though I hadn't noticed her—'I'm sure if all's true, it is quite as strange to me as to you : I never was so took aback, and I hope you'll throw no blame on me for it.'

"'For what, Mrs. Hobbs?' I said; 'what's true? What's the matter? Can't you tell a fellow at once, and not go playing with him, when you've got him on the hook sure enough?'

"'Well indeed, Mrs. Abbott, I don't like telling things too suddint like,' she said, 'but if James would rather know, no one has a better right, of course, than him. Well then, they say that Albert Strong went to Lee this morning, too. His shop's empty, and the quarter's just up. They suspect that they have been married at Lee. Strong has been sleeping there, and walking backwards and forwards for a fortnight, and they say the banns must have been cried there; she came into a bit of money about a month ago.'

"'Money! and me never to know!' I said, 'why 'twas only yesterday I asked her if she wanted any! I'm off to Lee, mother; if he's not married her, I'll follow them, break every bone in his body and bring her safe home to Mrs. Hobbs. If they *are* married, I'll come home to you, mother : I said I'd be your son all my life.'

"I was not long getting to Lee, but the clerk had gone out fishing, and the parson had ridden over to Barnstaple. So I climbed to the top of a hill and watched till the boats began returning. It had got so dark, I had to wait for the clerk to get a lantern, before we went to the church. He brought out the book, and there sure enough was the marriage : Albert Strong and Susan Turner. Mr. Wrey had married them and gone to Barnstaple after, the clerk said. I never spoke a word, went out of the church, and straight home.

"I went about my work a week or two, and then I felt I had no stomach for it. I must have a change of some sort, and I did not see how to get it, and leave the poor mother, either. I was turning it over in my mind when a groom from Squire Bassett's rode up, and said a young gentleman in his yacht was off Watermouth Bay, and wanted a handy man to do some little work on board at once; so he, being a friend of mine, called to give me the job. Even this was different from what I had been at in Ilfracombe, so I took up my wallet, and told mother not to wait dinner for me; got a lift in a boat as the tide served, and was there in no time.

"The yacht was off Watermouth Island (you must go and see that, and the caves there too, young gentlemen, some day; a beautiful trip it is). Well, I went on board, and Mr. Hamilton himself was there, and told me at once all he wanted done. I did it to his satisfaction; he going up and down and coming back every now and then, and asking me a question or two.

"'Do you know anything about working a ship?' said he. 'I've never been on board one like this, sir,' I said, 'but of course I am as much at home in our fishing smacks and such like craft, as on land, living always by the sea.'

"'And you're a handy man and can give a hand to anything going on, I hear,' continued Mr. Hamilton. 'And a sober one too, which is best of all.'

"'Yes, sir, I hope so.'

"'And your name's James Abbott, I think?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'Well, Abbott, don't leave the yacht till I return. You see there's a cold pie and some bread and cheese there: eat your dinner, and I'll come back.'

"In about an hour I heard him come back, and Squire Bassett with him. I could hear them talking all the way, and somehow felt it was about me. So I got up and stood ready. My work was all done and my wallet over my shoulder, and the two gentlemen came in, and the Squire nodded and said: 'Good-day, Abbott. My friend Mr. Hamilton wants a steady, useful fellow to go with him in his yacht to the Mediterranean: he's taken rather a fancy to you, and came to enquire of me.'

"'The fact is, Abbott,' said Mr. Hamilton, 'I've had so much trouble with my fellows getting drunk, I've had no peace of my life; now I've a new crew. I don't want you to do much in working the vessel: but a handy man to wait on me, and take charge of things, and do any carpentering required, will suit me far better than the drunken valet I had to send off before I had had him a month.'

"Here was just what I had been longing for! 'And how long should we be away, sir?' I asked.

"'Eighteen months or two years: not more, certainly,' said Mr. Hamilton.

"'I'd like it above all things, sir, and I think I could give you satisfaction. I've my old mother at home, and I must speak to her before I could give anything positive of an answer.'

"'Where does she live?' said Mr. Hamilton.

"'Oh, I know,' said the Squire; 'at least my people do; we can call this evening, as we pass through the town, and see what Mrs. Abbott thinks of it.'

"In the evening Mr. Hamilton came; he shook hands with mother, and very pleasant he was; he talked a good bit, and he told her it was extraordinary the difficulty there was in getting sober men, and, with his small crew, it would be madness to start if he couldn't depend on them. 'They're far worse than animals,' says he. 'Positively a monkey after being once made drunk will never touch it again, and just look at *men!*'

"Well, my dear mother never made any trouble about my going, never thought of herself in the matter. 'Jem,' she said, 'I'm far better pleased in my heart that you should get this situation and leave me, than that you should have stayed at home married to Susan; she never was worth so much as your little finger.'

"Well, we started in the *Isabella*. We touched at Ushant, off the coast of France, and then across the Bay of Biscay to Ferrol, then Lisbon, Cadiz, and Gibraltar, and up and down the Mediterranean, sometimes staying weeks at one place. I enjoyed it all uncommon; saw Mount Vesuvius smoking, and often watched it at night; it was splendid to see the fire rising out of the crater. However, at last the time came for us to return home; I had written regular to my mother, and heard often from her. I wasn't sorry when Mr. Hamilton told us we were homeward bound. We had the worst storm all through the two years off Cape Finisterre, but our little craft weathered it, and we reached Southampton in safety two years and one month since we left England.

"As soon as Mr. Hamilton could spare me I was anxious to be off home, and I left very early one Thursday morning, to catch the six o'clock government train to Exeter. I was going along the empty streets at a sharp pace, with a good big bundle on my stick over my shoulder, when, all of a sudden, in a narrow dirty street, a man half wild rushed out of a mean looking lodging house, and said: 'For heaven's sake, young man, come in here!'

"Now, young gentlemen, when I began my tale, I was to tell you I had never been frightened but once. Now's the time.

"'What for?' said I, stopping short.

"'He's hung himself! I'm afraid he's dead! For heaven's sake, come and help.'

"I went in after him up the narrow stair, put my bundle down, and followed him into an empty room. The fire-place projected a good way, so that there was like a small room on each side of it, which might be let to different lodgers. Behind the door, on a large hook, a wretched man had indeed hung himself.

"'Can you cut him down?' said my poor shivering guide. 'I had not the strength myself.'

"'Who are you?' I asked.

"'Only a fellow lodger, nigh as bad off as them: but I came to bring the poor wife a sup of tea, and found him here; then I heard a step, I ran down and saw you coming along.'

"All this was said in a hurried whisper, as I got out my knife; but I could not reach him quite; the hook was so high, and the bit of rope so short. 'Lean on me,' said my guide; 'I could bear your weight for a moment, and you could catch hold of the door.'

"I got my knee on his back, then one foot on his shoulder to steady myself, whilst my left arm grasped hold of the door, and I began cutting at the rope. I had cut half through, when my frail support tottered, and at the same moment, the door swayed under me. Dropping my knife, I clutched at something to recover myself; it was the dead man, and down I came to the ground.

"Down I came, and straight atop of me fell the corpse. I had cut more than half through the rope, and the remaining thwarts were not

enough to support him when my guide let go, and I caught hold of his coat. Young gentlemen, I *was* frightened then.

"Straight upon me fell the dead man. I saw his staring eyes, felt his cold face against mine; the horror of it went all through me, shivering to my very inside, and I believe I half fainted. When I recovered myself we lifted him and laid him straight out behind the door, and I sat down on the stairs a bit, to get heart again.

"'There's no use telling the poor wife,' whispered little Pegson: 'she can't live over the day; better not tell her. There was a distress put in yesterday and all the poor things they had was took from them; only her bed left, as she would not want it long: seen better days; brought up quite genteel, they was. I had brought her a cup of tea, but no time to give it her, when I found him there. Would you, in charity, give it whilst I inform the Police? I'm the oldest lodger, and it will be expected of me.'

"I was too late for the six o'clock train, so I agreed to stay where I was. He was just going down the stair, when he turned back suddenly. 'Sir, do you know what brought him to *that*,' pointing to the wretched body, 'and brought them to their miserable state? I can tell you: it was nothing but *drink*. He drank everything: wife and child might starve, so that he could get a drop of the devil's bottle.'

"Then he hurriedly left, and taking up the cup of tea, I went towards the bed.

"There was a little child fast asleep, the mother's face was hidden, and her arms stretched out over the child. At first I thought she was dead, but when I gently moved one arm, I heard the quick short breathing. I put a spoonful of tea into her mouth, and heard it swallowed; I gave a few more; then she turned over, and I saw her face. Young gentlemen, it was poor Susan—it was indeed!

"Her eyes were closed, but she took the tea eagerly; it refreshed her. She felt for her child, and her thin fingers moved in his curly hair, whilst big tears fell down her cheeks.

Pegson came back, stepping gently across to me.

"'Has she taken all?' he said; 'oh, I'm glad. And the boy asleep? Very good.'

"'Here,' I said, taking some money from my pocket, 'Pegson, go and get some food, some milk, a loaf of bread, a little brandy.'

"'No, no,' he said, 'she wont touch that; never would, poor soul. She said she knew what brandy had brought him to, and she would never wet her lips with it, were she dying ever so.'

"'Then what you think best: something for the child, and some meat for yourself,' I answered. Well, young gentlemen, she recognised me before she died, and told me a bit of her history. 'It was drink,' she said, 'that ruined him. We moved about from one town to another,' she said, 'and we got poorer and poorer, and the poorer we got the more he drank. Oh, James, how badly I behaved

to you, and you so kind! If any girl was ever sorely punished for her flirting, foolish, deceitful ways, it's me. And what I could have seen in him, I'm sure I've often wondered!'

"She could hardly draw her breath, and I was afraid of her speaking too much. 'Oh, but I've so little time,' she said, 'so little time; and I want to tell you all before he comes in again.'

"She did not know, and she could not see the ghastly thing lying in that ugly corner, as I did. I had never recognized him. I doubt if even his own mother would have known him now.

"'Oh, James,' she continued, 'I'm ashamed to ask you, but what can I do? I can't die in peace and think of his father having him!' and with her thin trembling hands, she pushed her boy's curly head towards me. I promised I would take him and rear him as if he had been my own, and she cried and blessed me. She only said a few words after I had promised. 'I took him to Church: Harry, *Harry*,' she repeated, to show that was his name. I knelt down, and said, 'Our Father.' 'God bless you,' she said, and never spoke again. In an hour or so it was all over.

"I got Pegson to arrange about her funeral and she was buried that same evening; him and me followed her to the grave, with the baby in my arms. Then I made poor Pegson a present, and leaving that wretched house, went to the Railway Inn, near the station, where I was to start from next morning. Mother didn't know when I was coming, so she had not been frightened at me not arriving; I had only written I would get away as soon as Mr. Hamilton could spare me.

"I had a good bit to go by coach at the end, but we reached Ilfracombe at last, and catching hold of a boy, I bade him run to Mrs. Abbott, and tell her a sailor man told him to say James Abbott would be home that evening: so I found mother all ready on the look out for me. She looked surprised at the child at first. 'It's poor Susan's, mother,' I said; so she gave him a drink of milk, and then took him off with some hot water, and brought him down again, looking quite different.

"Mrs. Hobbs had died whilst I was away, and the few friends we had, mother told about Harry. But he grew up to call her Granny, and me father always, and he always said his name was Harry Abbott, and I never said nothing against it. He was the very image of his poor mother, her pretty light curly hair and all; didn't feature or favour his father, even in a look, and that was a comfort. As he grew bigger, nothing would please him but the sea: and so when he was about fifteen, and I had a letter from Mr. Hamilton to say he had come into a large property and married, and was going to take Lady Hamilton (he was Sir John Hamilton now), a trip in one of the best yachts ever built, and if I had a mind he'd be glad of me to go with them—I spoke to mother, and we agreed to accept, and I offered Harry to go along with me.

"So we two joined the *Emerald* at Devonport. I thought if

Harry liked it as he expected, he should enlist on board a man-of-war afterwards. We were only to be a year away. Ten months had passed, and we had left Madeira homeward bound; there had been a bit of a squall and a heavy sea running all day, and I had taken a turn of the watch, as I often did to save Harry: he was growing fast, and I liked him to get the morning watch as much as possible, not to break his rest. So I had just turned in at 8 bells, (that's four o'clock,) and was dozing off, when I was sure I heard a cry of 'Father, father!'

"Before I could leap out of my berth, came that dreadful sound, 'Man overboard!'

"I was up in no time, and tore along the deck. The yacht had hove to, so I seized the rope they were just going to throw to him, and plunged in. The sun was rising and it was quite light, but a heavy sea on still. I saw his curly head above the water as I leaped overboard, and swam for dear life towards him, but the sea was rough, and they thought on board he had struck against something in falling.

"I never saw my Harry again—never saw his curly head no more. They hauled me back on board, more dead than alive, and when I came to myself again, we were plunging along with a stiff breeze, ten knots an hour. I knew we had left Harry miles behind, all alone in his watery grave."

"Oh, captain," said the two Sinclairs, "I am so sorry!"

They had altered their position several times as the interest increased, but now they stood up by him, and put a hand kindly on each shoulder. "I am so sorry," they repeated.

"How long ago is it?" said Alfred.

"Well, sir, this day twenty-four years I landed in Southampton, and it's nearly eight years since Harry's death: he was nearly sixteen. Mother said she thought he was about fourteen months old when I brought him home that night. I often think when him and me, please the Lord, meet again, will he call me Father still, or will he know that I wasn't his father. They know everything up yonder, no doubt," said Abbott, looking up at the blue sky, "and I often wonder. I never told a real lie about it to him, never. Sometimes he would ask me how long he had been at Ilfracombe, and I could tell him since he was little more than he was a twelvemonth old. And where had he been before; I could tell him that too; and if he asked, was he born at Southampton, I used to say yes, for I could not tell of any other place for certain. So I did my best to tell no lie. Often he'd ask, was I very fond of his mother? perhaps he thought it strange I was away with Mr. Hamilton when he was born, that made him ask that; but I could truly say, 'Yes my lad, I was—very fond;' that was truth any how: so I hope if he understands now all wasn't just as he thought, whilst he was with us, that he sees how I did it for the best all the while—I hope he does.

"A more dutiful, good lad to me and his Granny, as he always called her, could not have been; no son ever behaved better to his father than my Harry did to me, never; and no father could have been prouder of his lad, nor missed him more sorely when he was taken away, than me—I'm certain sure of that. Almost too pretty for a youngster he was; his eyes as blue as the skies, and his face so sweet and fresh, like a basket of white hearts till he got sunburnt a bit, and his hair all bright and curly, just like his poor mother's.

"When we joined at Devonport, Sir John looked at him and then at me, and said, 'Why, Abbott, he's not a bit like you!' and I said, 'No Sir, he's the image of his mother.' And Lady Hamilton said, 'I'm afraid your mother was sorry to part with you,' and Harry answered, so innocent like: 'Mother's dead, my lady.'

"Lady Hamilton took his picture a many times. 'I want to draw a sailor boy,' she said, 'and Harry will do beautifully;' so she had him in the cabin often and gave him fruit or sweet biscuits: very kind she was. She gave me one of the pictures of him afterwards, the best she had, she said, and I have it betwixt the leaves of my Bible.

"I had never read my Bible much, young gentlemen, before I lost him. I used to sit and listen whilst my mother read a chapter, or a bit of one, before we went to bed, out of respect, but I had never taken to it much myself; now since Harry went, I've read a deal of it, and particular all the chapters about Heaven. It must be a grand place, a very grand place. One verse says, there shall be no more sea—but another talks of a sea of glass, and the beautiful fruit and leaves of gold, and gates made of one pearl, and all them precious stones.

"I don't suppose myself they're the little bits of things we call gold and precious stones here, but only as we set more store by them than anything else in this world, the Lord has used them to show us how beautiful everything will be; more beautiful than ear has ever heard of, or eye has ever seen, or mind can think, however clever the mind may be.

"It isn't always the cleverest that sees or hears or understands most, though, by no means. It's the innocent mind that thanks God for making everything beautiful or wonderful that gets most knowledge and most pleasure, to my thinking.

"I mind always the difference I saw in a clever man that came from London, and I heard knew the names of every fish, and every shell, and every stone in the kingdom, and his little girl. They came down here one day: she had her basket and red cloak on, and was running about picking up every thing she could find, and all of a sudden she came near me. I was sitting on that rock yonder; and lifting up the seaweed, she saw some of them sea anemones; so she called out, 'Papa, papa, oh, do come here!' And he came—very fond of her he seemed—and she said, 'Did you ever see anything so beautiful, papa!' And

he patted her head and said, 'Oh, that's only a '—something or other with a very long name I can't remember; it was not English he spoke, and passed on; and she stood still, with her hands clasped behind her, looking at them, and at last she said half shyly to me: 'Don't you think it was good of God to make these things so beautiful with these bright blue spots, just like a tiny necklace of blue forget-me-nots: and if I hadn't found them, there was nothing but the seaweed to see them, besides God Himself.' And I said, 'Yes, my dear, I think it was, and if you see these anemones in the water, you'll think them more beautiful still.' And I showed her some shells, and things she had never seen, for it was her first visit to the sea—that was.

"But indeed, young gentlemen, it must be time for you to run home, I expect, for your dinner, and I hope I haven't kept you too long."

"Oh, no, captain, not a bit too long," said Alfred. "I've been wishing mother had heard you, for she would have written a story directly about it if she had."

"Would she, sir?" said Abbott, smiling, "you'd better tell it her then; but it would be rare odd to see all about an old fellow like me in a book. Good-day, sir, good-day."

The boys sprang up the steep path leading to the town: but in a few moments, Alfred came tearing back, catching Abbott before he pulled off in his boat.

"We want to know, captain, about your mother; you did not tell us. Is she dead?" he asked slowly.

"Ay, ay, sir," said Abbott, quietly. "I've been alone in the world now these five years."

"I'm so sorry about Harry," said the boy, taking the rough hand in his own; "so very sorry."

"Thank you kindly, Mr. Alfred. I'll be ready for your fishing at sunset, if you've a mind. Good-day, sir; there's your brother up there waiting for you, you'd better be off; it's nigh upon two o'clock."

M. E. G.

THE ROYAL MAUSOLEUM, FROGMORE.

By E. H. Hudson, Author of "Louisa, Queen of Prussia."

WHEN Queen Victoria marked the site for a mausoleum to be the resting-place, wherein the noble form of her beloved husband was to pass through the hidden mysteries of death to the glorious manifestations of resurrection, it was natural that she should choose a spot near the mound on which stood the mausoleum lately erected to her mother.

While the Duchess of Kent was passing through the latter years of her wonderfully unselfish life—a life devoted to her child, and to the best interests of the nations and peoples over whom that daughter was providentially ordained to rule—the watchful mother resided at Frogmore House whenever the Court was at Windsor. During these tranquil closing years the Duchess took much pleasure in the grounds surrounding her home. Evidences of this still remain to be looked on with warm heart-felt interest. Among them stands a very beautiful *Wellingtonia* planted by her hand.

From the morning until the evening of life a garden allures to healthful exercise of both bodily and mental powers, brings out that most excellent talent—the faculty which enables us to realize unseen spiritual operations, by observing and reflecting on the effectual operations of nature.

The Duchess expressed a wish to her daughter and the Prince Consort that she might be laid in the garden which she loved so well, and suggested the mound on which the mausoleum now stands. For she liked the idea that when they walked with their children in Frogmore gardens they would think of her as they passed it. The chosen site was then occupied by a small temple, erected by King George the Third, on a thickly-wooded mound, separated from the surrounding garden by a dark stream. The works of the tomb-house prepared for the Duchess of Kent were begun during her life time. We may well believe that as the eyes of that courageous Christian woman looked on the large unhewn stones, saw them conveyed to the appointed spot, and fitted into the positions they were henceforth to occupy, that each stone might do its part towards upholding the substantial edifice, the rising walls must have awakened echoes of the voice of God speaking in that garden—must have brought to mind many a precious passage of His Holy Word concerning the One Foundation, and all that rests upon it.

Being on the side of a hill, the tomb had a cave-like appearance before the superstructure was added, after the interment of the

Duchess. Her Royal Highness died in the 75th year of her age, A.D. 1861—the year so deeply marked as a year of bereavement.

During the nine last months of the Prince Consort's life, the Duchess of Kent's mausoleum was the object on which his warm heart expended most of its feeling and energy. The Prince assisted Her Majesty in designing the mausoleum, and devoted a great deal of time to actually superintending the work as it progressed. Consequently it now possesses a double interest, as the monument erected over the remains of Queen Victoria's excellent mother, and, moreover, as the last completely reared by the Prince Consort; characterized by his deep religious convictions, his simple genuine feeling, so free from every kind of ostentation, and his distinguished talents and pure taste.

The circular mausoleum is in the Greek style: the exterior of the dome is covered with copper, and surmounted with a stone balustrade. The frieze below is of polished granite with bronze festoons. Sixteen Ionic pillars of polished grey Penrhyn granite, with bronzed capitals and bases, support the dome. The cornice above the pillars is surmounted by a parapet, on which stand sixteen vases as terminals above the pillars. On the cornice immediately over the pillars is the Latin inscription which encircles the dome:—"Victoriae Mariae Lovisae, Cantii Dvcissae, Matris, Dilectissimae, Reliqvis, Conservandis, Hoc, Templvm, Pietatis, Monvmentvm, Consecrarvnt Victoria, Britt. Regina, Et. Albertvs, Consors, Eivs, An. Sal. 1861."

The circular edifice is entirely surrounded by a broad terrace, from which you ascend to the door, remarkable for the graceful palm branches on its bronze panels, cast from drawings made by the Prince Consort.

The interior is richly decorated. The fresco painting in the lower part of the dome, under the blue glass and gold stars, represents the Saviour (as the central figure opposite the door), and on the right and left are three angels in each semicircle. These figures, with their surrounding ornaments of many colours, were all composed and painted by I. Frankl.

The statuary below, a white circle formed by cherubs' heads, is by Theed.

The walls are painted as if hung with crimson, on which a splendid pattern of armorial bearings is displayed in gold. This was drawn by L. Gruner, and painted by A. Müller.*

The mausoleum is lighted from the very top, chiefly from above the arch of the dome. The light streaming through the painted glass, on which we notice the symbol of the descending dove, throws a golden glow over the floor of inlaid marbles, and on the white marble statue of the Duchess. The Prince Consort half modelled the head of that statue; and, indeed, the whole was completed by

* The floor of inlaid marbles is the work of Messrs. Poole and Sons.

Theed under His Royal Highness's direction, as he worked from recollection. The features and expression of the countenance, and the attitude of the standing figure, altogether presents an admirable likeness. Theed excels in bringing out minute details; his drapery is wonderfully chiselled; we see not only the folds, but also the texture of the dress, and the pattern of the lace.

The Duchess is leaning against a pillar on which she rests her right arm. On the sides of this pilaster are sculptured fine medallion profile likenesses of the Prince of Leiningen and the Duke of Kent, and their armorial bearings enclosed in wreaths of olive.

On the front of the pedestal, under the names of the deceased and date of her death, we read these words:—

"*Her children shall arise up and call her blessed.*"—Prov. xxxi. 28.

"*Long as the heart beats life within her breast,*
Thy child will bless thee, guardian mother mild,
And far away thy memory will be blest
By children of the children of thy child!"

By the Queen's desire these lines were composed for the purpose by Alfred Tennyson.

The coffin of the late Duchess of Kent is enclosed in a sarcophagus of dark grey granite. It stands in the small vaulted chamber—the actual tomb prepared under her own direction. The rough rock-work of the exterior wall, and the substantial door, give the consistently sepulchral aspect to this lower part of the edifice. The terracated stone work, with the steps right and left, leading up from the first landing, were not in the original plan, but were suggested by the Crown Princess of Prussia in 1862. On that first landing, between the lowest steps of the opposite flights, is a niche in the wall containing a bust of Princess Feodora, wife of Prince Hohenloe Langenburg, daughter of the Duchess of Kent by her first husband, Prince Leiningen. This bust was also executed by Theed. The Latin inscription beneath informs the reader that it was placed beside the tomb of the mother lamented by them both, by her only sister Queen Victoria, in the year of Grace 1873.

When about to ascend the highest flight of steps, you pass between a pair of pretty bronze statues, by Geifs, of Berlin, after Ranch—two children, one reading the Gospel, the other holding a plate, as if asking alms. They seem to have been placed here to represent Faith and Charity.

To the terrace that surrounds this mausoleum, flowers of each passing season are brought to use their influence—gentle, but sometimes powerful—over the human heart. The view obtained there is pleasing from its peculiarly tranquil character. Enclosed by trees, except where a vista opens it to the extensive park beyond, the seclusion of the scene is perfect. The winding stream is the most

remarkable feature; on its smooth surface everything is reflected as on a mirror; and as it approaches Frogmore House it spreads out into a fine piece of ornamental water before the south front of the house.

In the garden, very near the Duchess of Kent's mausoleum, there now stands a tall elegant cross, in dark grey granite, erected by Queen Victoria, to the dear memory of a friend, who was for many years lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Kent, Augusta, fifth daughter of Thomas Bruce, seventh Earl of Elgin and Kincardine.

Thirty years of her active life were spent in the service of the Queen and the Duchess of Kent. She married the Dean of Westminster in 1864. Lady Augusta Stanley lies in Westminster Abbey.

When seen from a little distance, the general effect of the Duchess of Kent's mausoleum is good. It is a graceful temple-like edifice, standing high above the river that isolates it. In the classical beauty of its form and decoration; in its whiteness, giving back the sunshine and contrasting with the shade; in its solitude, it glimmers through the branches and rises superior to them all, guiding the eye upward to the clear blue sky. Round its base a wilderness of trees, bushes, and bending shrubs deepen the darkness of the stream by casting their shadows on it. Here and there we catch the wavering image of something connected with the resting places of the dead; and from one point a sweet picture of home life is sometimes very clearly reflected—the custodian's lodge, near the porch over the gates which shut in the grounds of the Royal Mausoleum. Lights and shades harmonizing with the flow of thought, lead us to rest beside the bridge to meditate upon the peaceful scene.

The bees humming among the flowers, the birds twittering and replying to one another, will not let us dream too deeply—will not let our vivid imagination ramble, as it fain would do, too far away from this green earth on which we should thankfully abide, patiently wait, until we are called, one by one, to go up higher, to look upon a world untouched by sin or sorrow.

The Prince Consort's mausoleum is only 400 yards, scarcely three minutes' walk, from that of the Duchess of Kent, but the undulations of the ground, and the intervening trees, prevent the one from being distinctly seen from the other during the leafy months of summer and early autumn.

In the year 1862, a portion of the enclosed strictly private grounds lying between Frogmore and the fine double avenue called the Long Walk, appeared well adapted to be consecrated as a burial-place, for already several grand old trees had imparted to it a venerable aspect. Three of these were especially taken under consideration when the building was planned. A tall fir tree was left to mark the centre of the side opposite the entrance, and two noble trees—a spreading cedar of Lebanon and a red cedar—were permitted to stand, the one on the right hand and the other on the

THE DUCHESS OF KENT'S MAUSOLEUM, FROGMORE.

left, like sentinels guarding the approach to the lower entrance gates at the foot of the granite steps.

Nearer to those gates a pair of slender cypresses, planted by the Queen, are growing well, and the adjacent lawn is made interesting by many a flourishing young tree planted by her Majesty, or by some member or friend of the Royal family. Every one of them is marked by a label which gives the planter's name and the date.

From this smooth, pleasant lawn, looking across the river on the farther bank, we see a tall Runic cross. It recalls words of the son of Fingal, and reminds us of the far-off island of Iona, a burial-place of ancient kings and heroes. Very appropriate is that rough stone to bear the name of a man whose character was indeed a rock —a portion of the rock of Truth, which existed before the light by which we see it was shed upon it. This monument bears the following inscription :—

"To the Memory of Baron Stockmar.
Born August 22nd, 1787; died July 9th, 1863.
The beloved and faithful friend of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, and the Royal Family.
This Cross was placed here by Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, A.D. 1864."

How inscrutable a dispensation of Providence it must have seemed to Baron Stockmar, when the Prince, to whom he was devotedly attached, was suddenly snatched away, cut off in the prime of manhood, while he himself was living on beyond the three score years and ten.

"The death of Prince Albert," says Max Müller, "was the death-blow to Stockmar's dearest and brightest hopes; he had felt for him the pride of a father, the love of a brother, and the devotion of an old and faithful servant. What others have said of the Prince Consort after his death, Stockmar said during his life."

More than four years before the death of the Prince, the Baron, on account of his failing health, had retired from the English Court to his native Coburg. In 1860 the Queen and Prince visited that place. Little could it then have been foreseen that it was the last time the Prince and the Baron were to meet in this world. In 1862 the widowed Queen saw him there, and when Her Majesty showed him photographs of the departed one, enshrined in both their hearts, he exclaimed, "My dear good Prince. How happy I shall be to see him again! And it will not be long."

At this time the old man had the consolation of seeing a young friend, whom he had lovingly watched from her earliest infancy, rejoicing in the development of her more than commonly-gifted mind. The Princess Royal, then Princess Frederick William of Prussia, with her husband, spent some time at Coburg. "Very often the people saw their Royal Highnesses wending their way on foot to Baron Stockmar's quiet house in the Weber Gasse."

The proposed Mausoleum to be erected at Frogmore must have then been sometimes spoken of, for already the Queen had ordered it to be built, and had confided the preparation of the design to Professor Ludwig Gruner, of Dresden, and Mr. M. A. Humbert, of London. The first stone was laid by the Queen, surrounded by her children, who were in England at the time. It bears this inscription :—

"*The foundation stone of this building, erected by Queen Victoria in pious remembrance of her great and good husband, was laid by her on the 15th day of March,* A.D. 1862. '*Blessed are they that sleep in the Lord.*'"

Under the management of Mr. Dines, the building proceeded with great rapidity, and the ceremony of consecration was performed on the 17th of December, 1862, by the Bishop of Oxford. On the following morning, before the break of day, the remains of the Prince Consort were removed from the Royal vault at St. George's Chapel, and placed in the new building, in a stone sarcophagus. On the 26th of November, 1868, they were finally enclosed in the marble sarcophagus.

The ground plan of the Mausoleum consists of a central octagon, thirty feet in diameter, from which project four recesses or chapels, which give to the whole the form of the Greek cross. The chapels are connected by corridors. A dome surmounts the central octagon. The entrance porch, on the east side, is approached by two flights of steps.

The exterior of the building is entirely composed of granite and Portland stone; the lower portion, to the height of ten or eleven feet, being granite, placed in four layers. The upper portion of the edifice is of Portland stone and pink granite from the Isle of Mull.*

The sixteen polished columns supporting the windows that light the octagon, and also the six that stand in pairs, one on each side of the three large windows which light the chapels, are of deep red Peterhead granite. All the small polished columns holding less important positions are half Cairngall and half Rubieston, both blue Scotch granites of lighter and darker shade.

The polished columns in the porch and doorway are monolithic, of Lamorna granite—a dark green porphyrous granite with a mottled appearance; it comes from Cornwall.

The pavement under the porch is of inlaid marbles. The Irish green predominates; a very pretty sea-green. It comes from the mountains of Connemara on the west coast of Ireland.

The building, by means of transepts called chapels, branches out to north, south, east, and west; but the grand old trees to be included in the plan seem to have been more thought of than the points of the compass.

* The four layers which constitute the lower part of the exterior walls are—1. Red granite, from the Isle of Mull. 2. Deep red Peterhead, from Aberdeen. 3. Dark green, from Guernsey. 4. Light grey, from Devonshire.

It is elevated considerably above the level of the ground, the whole floor being supported by massive brick vaults, which form chambers with loop-holes for the purposes of ventilation, and to guard the superstructure from getting damp. The foundation stone is the only interesting object in this basement.

Looking upward, as you stand at the foot of the steps, in front of the entrance, your eye will be arrested by the circular medallion in *alto relievo* inserted in the upper part of the porch. It is a head of the Saviour, in terra cotta, was sent from Germany as a present to the Prince Consort, not long before his fatal illness, by his eldest daughter. Admiring it as a work of art, Her Royal Highness had given it to her father with pleasure, little thinking where it would be permanently fixed. There is also another circular medallion, on which is the monogram of the Queen and the Prince Consort, with the figures that show the date, 1862, inclosed in a wreath of palm branches: this is built into the main wall of the first recess or chapel; consequently is in the gable above the porch.

The wide steps which give a stately appearance to this beautiful but small edifice, lead up to the entrance porch on the eastern side of the Mausoleum. The lower flight is of mottled grey granite from Devonshire. The parapet on each side being of deep red Peterhead granite from Aberdeen. The upper flight is of dull black Galway marble, which has a very sombre effect.

Arrived at the porch, you stand on a polished pavement of inlaid marbles, consisting of Sicilian white, Emperor red, Irish green, and Bardiglio, a deep blue marble from Carrara.

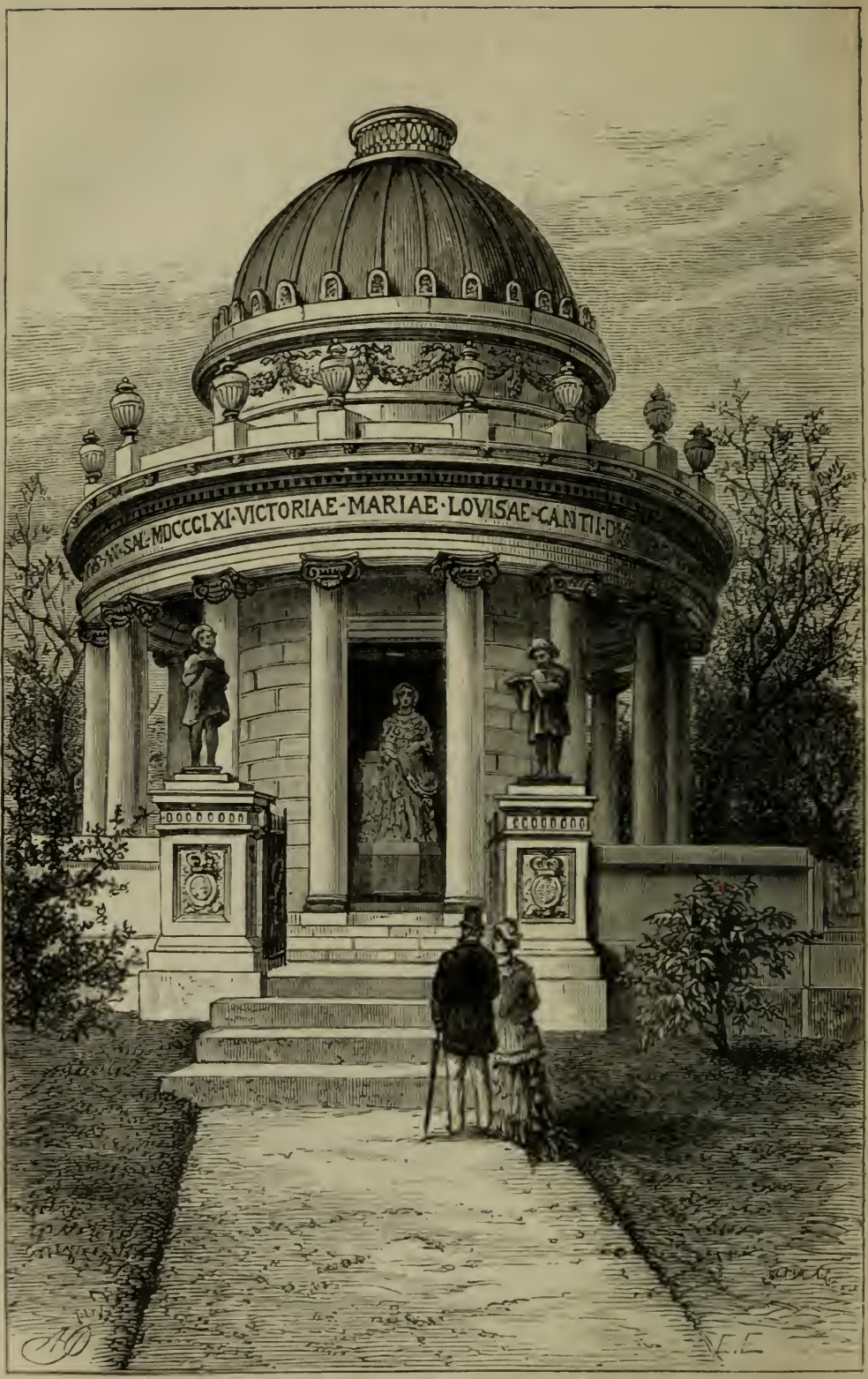
The angels in the upper part of the wall of the porch are from the cartoons of Professor Schönherr, of Dresden, and the frieze running round three sides of the porch, and above the inscription over the portal displays the royal arms, and otherwise introduces relief and colour.

To the right and left of the entrance to the porch there will shortly be placed two large bronze statues modelled by Adolph Braymann, of Brunswick, and cast by M. Howald, of the same town. These statues are to represent the Angel of Resurrection, and the Angel of Judgment. The walls of the porch are still in an unfinished state, they are to be richly adorned with angels bearing palm branches, and at their feet a frieze in relief with emblems and initials.

The ceiling of the porch is of Venetian Mosaic, furnished by Dr. Salviati, of Venice.

Above the bronze entrance gates, in the same metal, on the upper part of the portal, is the Latin inscription :—

ALBERTI PRINCIPIS QVOD MORTALE ERAT
HOC IN SEPVLCHRO DEPONI VOLVIT VIDVA
MŒRENS VICTORIA REGINA A.D. MDCCCLXII.
VALE DESIDERATISSIME !



THE DUCHESS OF KENT'S MAUSOLEUM, FROGMORE.

HIC DEMVM CONQVIESCAM TECVM
TECVM IN CHRISTO CONSVRGAM.

All that was subject to death of Prince Albert
His mourning widow, Queen Victoria,
Desired to be deposited in this sepulchre.

Adieu, missed and regretted one,
Here may I at length with Thee repose,
In Christ, with Thee arise.

This epitaph, cast in bronze, is immediately over the beautiful open-work brass gates which admit to the interior of the Mausoleum. The pattern of the brass and bronze trellis-work is appropriate as it is elegant—a running pattern of trefoil twining with rue: the former an emblem of faith in the Holy Trinity, the latter an emblem of sorrow, one of the bitter things with which the Hand of Love and Mercy flavours "The Goblet of Life."* The strawberry leaf is also introduced. All these emblems are suitably heraldic. The rue is the heraldic leaf of the Saxon dynasty; the shamrock is emblazoned in the arms of the triune kingdom over which Queen Victoria reigns, and the time honoured tradition concerning it deserves to live for ever though it is but a pre-historic legend.†

The interior of the Mausoleum is carried out in the Italian *cinque cento* style. The Prince Consort was not only a patron, but also a hearty lover of art. He looked through both art and nature up to nature's God—looked up with the single eye. Our Lord and Saviour said "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

The Prince had diligently cultivated his taste for art, not only for the sake of his own gratification, but also because he felt that in his position, increase of knowledge, expansion of sympathy in every direction must tend to increase his power of usefulness. In 1839, the year before his marriage, Prince Albert visited Rome. The paintings of Raphael must have especially pleased him, as his recollections of them induced him to commence what is now well known as the Windsor Raphael Collection—now nearly complete, and the most perfect in existence.

When giving her instructions to Professor Ludwig Gruner, under whose direction every inch of the work was done, the Queen was no doubt herself impelled by the desire to consult the taste of her departed husband. When wall-painting had to be thought of, his Raphael collection was referred to; consequently, within the

* "The Goblet of Life." A Poem, by Longfellow.

† The legend narrates the story of the landing of St. Patrick on the coast of Ireland, and the violence against which he had to contend when endeavouring to convert the natives to Christianity; until, by the help of the shamrock, he had persuaded them to acknowledge the Trinity in Unity. Plucking a trefoil, he said—"Is it not as possible for the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be one, as for these three leaves to grow upon a single stalk?" By means of this illustration St. Patrick gained the attention of the wild pagans; they reflected, believed, and understood as much of the Divine mystery as is revealed to man.

Mausoleum the painting by Consoni, in the arch over the doorway, is from one of the great Italian master's noblest works—from one of the grand old frescoes in the *Stanza della Segnatura* of the Vatican.

In the original painting Raphael grouped the three allegorical figures, Fortitude, Prudence, and Moderation, round the arch above a window, and put Justice over head in the ceiling, thus symbolically representing the four cardinal virtues.

In the mausoleum we see Prudence, or Wisdom, in the centre, Fortitude on her right, and Moderation on her left hand.

Fortitude is represented in a sitting posture, her figure turning towards a lion standing at her right side, her left hand being on the lion's neck. She is partly clad in armour, the cuirass protects the bosom and heart; she wears a helmet surmounted by a wreath of oak, and the right leg, which is put prominently forward, from beneath the drapery, is defended by the buskin, as if to signify, that the foot of virtue is forearmed, ever ready to pursue her daily path through the midst of her foes, always guarded against the dangers of sudden surprise. In her right hand Fortitude grasps a young oak tree, bearing acorns, the emblem of growing strength and of victory. She is attended not only by the lion, but also by a winged genius, a messenger from some higher sphere.

Prudence, or Wisdom, the symbolical figure which occupies the central position, has two faces looking in opposite directions—that of a young woman and an old man—to signify, that in this virtue the peculiar characteristics of youth and age, and of both sexes, are blended. It is weight, that faculty on which depends the right balance of the mind. Prudence looks both behind her and before her—prepares for the future, while contemplating the past. On her breast she wears the ægis, or shield of Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom. A winged genius is helping her to hold up a mirror in front of the young face, to indicate that self-inspection and reflection are necessary to prudence. Another genius waves a torch before the old man's face, to show that the light of experience is valued and used by the wise and prudent.

Moderation, or Temperance, is a graceful figure. The head is bound as if by a linen band passed under the chin. Between the fingers of her right hand she holds the bit of a long bridle, the left hand lightly holds the reins, but as if ready to draw them instantly, should they need to be tightened. A genius seated near her is pointing with his forefinger to either the mouth-piece of the bridle, or to the sky above.

Raphael was fond of introducing genii into his pictures. They belonged to classical mythology and preserved poetical memories of a bygone age, when the ancient Romans believed that every person had his own genius, a spiritual being who introduced him into life, accompanied him through its course, and conducted him out of it at the close of his career.

The lessons that may be drawn from Raphael's beautiful allegory

are good for every generation of men, and for every condition of society. A christian needs as much as a heathen to be impressed with the conviction that vital internal energy, as symbolized by the young fruitful oak tree, and also something outside self, as symbolized by the armour—both human and superhuman life and strength are needed by all who have to take part in the struggle of life : that prudence cannot exist with those who look neither backward nor forward on their path, who neither ponder on the things that the Lord hath done, nor consider their own ways. Under God's blessing, prudence develops into wisdom, or rather, they prove to be identical.

Moderation, holding her long bridle, says to every one who now looks up to her, as she said thousands of years ago : "Throw this bridle over all whom it is thine to rule or to guide, but above all, throw it over thyself, for there can be no consistent temperance but that obtained by means of self-restraint and self-control."*

The cardinal virtues deserve that distinguished appellation. The Latin word *cardo* means a hinge. Oh, how much turns upon these hinges ! Has Christ destroyed them and the moral laws that hung upon them, or is He using them in His own Church, which He is building : and will they remain after all the scaffolding has been removed, when everything that was useful only while the building was going on has been taken away, and that Church stands forth in its perfect beauty of holiness ?

The text beneath the picture answers this question :—"*He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment.*"—Rev. iii. 5.

Equally edifying is the parallel passage—iii. 12.—"*Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.*"

Turning away from this wall-painting, the only one in the Mausoleum not taken from the Old or New Testament, we will step on directly into the Octagon to take a general view of the interior.

(*To be concluded.*)

* In the original fresco by Raphael, at the Vatican, Prudence, Fortitude, and Moderation are connected with "Jurisprudence;" as if to indicate that, without the co-operation of these virtues, Jurisprudence would fail to reach its end.

HOW FARMER REES FOUND HIS MEMORY.

By Anne Beale.

THE farm of Manorgwyn, or the White Manor, was situated about five miles from our town of Trefavon. It was a place of traditions, having been in the olden time the seat of a branch of the renowned family of Ap Shenkin, and was still a house of some pretension. It lay beneath Brynmawr, or Big Hill, and had, on its right, woods well stocked with game; on its left, a pond swarming with ducks and geese; in front, a somewhat disorderly garden; and at the back, a well-kept farmyard. There were signs of plenty on all sides. The whitest and plumpest of sheep roamed the hill, and well-to-do black cattle, relieved by an occasional Alderney cow, grazed in the meadows or drank from the sparkling brook that coursed through them. Fields of wheat and barley, surrounded by flowering hedgerows, throve hard by; and hay-fields were abundant.

The manor, or farmhouse, contained some relics of past grandeur, possessing a large wainscoted hall, with an ornamented ceiling, and other quaint apartments, with deep-set, stone-framed oriel windows. Some of these old rooms were used as granaries, or cheese and apple rooms, while others were appropriated to the family. Of course they were haunted by Ap Shenkins of past generations, and equally of course, the ghost stories, though current, could never be demonstrated: therefore it was impossible to tell what these wandering spirits thought of the fall and decline of their ancestral halls.

The furniture of the still inhabited rooms was certainly not so well cared for as the stock and crop outside, and betrayed tokens of the absence of the delicate feminine touch. The symptoms proved the disease, for the tenant of Manorgwyn was a bachelor. This was the more to be lamented, as there were numerous spinsters who would gladly have united his and their solitary condition into a perfect whole. But Rees, Manorgwyn, as this worthy was called, had something better to do than to dawdle after spinsters, how beautiful and housewifely soever they might be. He had never seen a woman that he admired half as much as his favourite animals, or whom he considered as worthy of note as a field of waving corn. He thought them all very well in their way, but fancied he could do better without them.

Mr. Matthew Rees was a fine portly man of some forty or fifty years of age. Single blessedness certainly agreed with him, for his face was smooth and rosy, his eyes bright, his hair still unstreaked with grey, and his voice as clear and loud as the clearest and loudest of the Llanfach Church bells. Indeed, Nadolig, the clerk, was wont

to say that when Rees, Manorgwyn joined in the psalms, 'twas like the bellowing of his own prize bull. Nevertheless, he was more musical than the clerk suspected, and sang as good a song at dinners, social or agricultural, as anyone else. Not being, as it is called, a family man, business and appointments multiplied upon him to such an extent that his friends, particularly Dr. Jones, would jocularly tell him that he might as well have a score of children as lose his head over the affairs of the whole parish.

This "loss of his head" was his sorest trouble. He was such an absent man that he would sometimes seriously reflect whether he could have been present when he came into the world. Still this absence of mind rarely interfered with his daily or weekly duties. He transacted all his business as methodically as if he had been a machine wound up; but if anything new or unforeseen occurred, if he were expected to remember a date or a name, or to act out of the usual routine, the machine got out of order at once. And no wonder. When one has not only a large farm to superintend and support, but is right-hand man to the chairman of the Board of Guardians, churchwarden, secretary to the Agricultural Society, adjudicator at agricultural shows and ploughing matches, referee in cases of dispute, and goodness knows what besides, who can wonder if memory fail, and absence of mind be the result?

This was Farmer Rees's case. He had undertaken a parish instead of a wife and family, and it was too much for him. He possessed, however, two Memoria Technicas—one within doors, one without. These were his housekeeper Mally, and his carter Jehoram, familiarly called Jeho. But they also failed him in the course of time.

"Mally, you never reminded me!" was the farmer's reproof one day when he had invited a friend to dinner and was himself engaged elsewhere.

"Deed to goodness, master, I'm forgetting myself," was the answer. "Time you should be looking for a wife. There's Miss Francis, Tygwyn, now, as they are saying has been keeping single all this time because of you. She's none so young, to be sure, but the young ones are so fullish that they'd soon be sending you to the 'sylum outright. People are saying that you're not so far from it now."

"What do they mean by that, Mally?"

"That when you was best man to Thomas, Llanwern, you did forget your own name, and couldn't write it in the register till some one was telling you."

"No wonder, Mally; I was never best man before, was I?"

"Well, sure! You are by the head, master; you've been best man fifty times, at least."

"That would be once a year ever since I was born. I must have been best man in my cradle, Mally. What were you saying about marrying?"

"That Francis, Tygwyn's daughter, Kezia, has been courting you for these thirty years, and that she's sharp as a needle, she is, with head enough for two."

"Francis, Tygwyn? Well, now, let me think. His daughter? I forget. Has he an unmarried daughter, Mally?"

"Lor, master, you know that he has, and she is single, they are saying, for your sake. Why, you used to make love to her when you were a boy."

"Did I? I never remember making love in my life, Mally. I shouldn't know how! Did you ever make love?"

"On my deed, master, you are funny. I've been courted many a time, but I was never of the forward sort, as Jeho will say for me, if you'll be asking him. We've been going together long enough now."

Rees, Manorgwyn, opened his eyes, and they were not destitute of the sparkle of amusement. In spite of his oblivious temperament, he took in a joke at the moment, even if he forgot it the next. Kezia Francis was single for his sake, and Jeho and Mally were "going together," and doubtless feathering their nests, or rather Mally her beds, from his poultry. Indeed, he sometimes suspected that these faithful domestics had their own interests at heart as well as his, and now he understood why. Mally was preparing her Stafell; and the feather bed, bolster and pillows were indispensable to that Welsh trousseau. However, he soon forgot this, but resolved to do his best to remember that Miss Francis was ready for him when Jeho and Mally "went together for better for worse," and took his feathers with them.

Mally was justified in her assertion concerning Miss Francis. This lady had quietly allowed forty-five years of her life to slip by without taking to herself a helpmeet, and, strange as it may seem, for the sake of Rees, Manorgwyn. When she was seventeen and he two-and-twenty, there had passed between them words that he had forgotten, but she had stored up in her memory. He had never made her an offer, never even told her that he loved her; but when they met at Christmas or Hollantide he had always chosen her as partner in the country dance, and sat by her side at supper. When they played at games of forfeits, he had always spelt "good opportunity" with her behind the door, knelt to her as "the one he loved best," even told her, when desired to pay some young lady a compliment, "that she was the prettiest girl he had ever seen in his life." Perhaps this was scarcely sufficient encouragement to justify a life-long attachment; still, Kezia at forty-five was as sincerely attached to Mr. Rees as she had been at seventeen. Women are more constant than men, particularly those who lead retired lives in the country, and see few strangers. Kezia rarely went from home herself, except to Trefavon on fair days, and being of a shy nature, made few new acquaintances. Thus her first love was enshrined in that particular

altar of the heart dedicated to the blind god, and was never either displaced or substituted. While Rees went to another county to improve himself in farming, and acquire the many qualities which helped to make him so present to others, so absent to himself, she was busy in household duties at Tygwyn, while her imagination pictured a possible future in which she and her supposed lover figured together.

But when he returned to Manorgwyn, he was so much engrossed by the improved system of farming, by hunting and shooting, by settling everybody's affairs and helping the world at large, by electioneering, and all sorts of canvassings, that he seldom engaged in the country dances or games of forfeits, and therefore never again distinguished or complimented Kezia. No one but herself knew how acutely she felt this neglect, and he certainly neither suspected it nor had any intention of neglecting her.

When Mally's feather-bed, bolster, and pillows were so full that another feather would — if not have broken their backs — have assuredly burst them, she and Jeho were married. They retired to a tidy cottage on the Manorgwyn estate, and Rees found that while he had two Memoria Technicas out of doors, he had none within. Both he and his household suffered from the loss.

"What were you saying to me about somebody's daughter, some young woman, Mally?" he inquired, a month or so after that worthy spinster became a matron.

"I was telling you of Francis Tygwyn's eldest daughter, Kezia, master. Make you haste, or she'll be too old for anybody. She is keeping her looks now, but we can't be young for ever. You're not so young as you were."

Rees, Manorgwyn, looked in the glass, and acknowledged that Mally spoke the truth.

"Jones, Tygwyn's daughter, Jemima, were you saying?" he inquired; for he had huddled up the three daughters of Job in his memory when he was young, and Jemima and Kezia had stuck there. Kerenhappuch had probably made her escape.

"Lor, master, no. Francis, Tygwyn's Kezia."

"To be sure. I remember. Francis, Tygwyn's Kezia. Thank you for reminding me, Mally. I'll tie a knot in my handkerchief—two knots, indeed. One for the father, the other for his wife——daughter, I mean. Francis, Tygwyn's Jemima—Yes, yes, Kezia; I shan't forget."

He went about his business, repeating "Francis, Tygwyn's Kezia," until the words rang in his head like the three bells of Llanfach Church. He occasionally alternated them by Jemima, but Kezia tolled the loudest.

The following Saturday he met Francis, Tygwyn, in the market.

"Ah, Jones—Francis, I mean—you were the man I was thinking of. They are telling me you've got a fine mare—no; a young heifer.

'Pon my soul, I can't remember. Which is it? Francis, Tygwyn's Kezia—Jemima. Name o' goodness which is it, man?"

"I have a daughter Kezia, Rees," replied Francis, half amused, half offended.

"Daughter! Of course, that's what I meant; and a very good daughter, they tell me. How is she?"

"You had better come and see. It's years since you've been to Tygwyn. Suppose you ride back with me."

"Surely I was there last week about that mare we were talking of: but I don't care if I do take a turn there again, after market. Look out for me."

Now Francis, Tygwyn, was a sharp man, and could make a hole through his neighbour's fence as well as most people. So he kept Rees in sight, and just as that absentee was about to canter homewards, hailed him with:

"Why, Rees, man, I thought you were coming to have dinner at Tygwyn, and see Kezia."

"Francis, Tygwyn's Kezia," exclaimed Rees, turning his horse's head, and leaving Trefavon by another road: for Tygwyn was as many miles east of the town as Manorgwyn was west.

The two farmers trotted briskly along the turnpike, and walked their well-fed horses quickly up the hill, reaching their destination in an hour.

When Rees shook hands with Kezia, he little thought what a flutter she was in. But he remembered Mally's advice and the necessities of his household, and tried to gather up his wits for the emergency of his case. When he looked at Kezia in an absent sort of way, he found himself wondering what sort of thing a wife was, and whether she would be more or less troublesome than a housekeeper. By degrees he took to admiring her round, fair face, and comely figure, and all of a sudden a vision of his youth flitted before his cloudy mind, and the woman who served so well, and made such excellent toddy, was transformed into a young damsel of seventeen, with whom he was dancing and playing at forfeits. He suddenly burst out laughing.

"Do you remember spelling 'opportunity' behind the door with me? What fun it was!" he said, his sides shaking at the pleasant recollection.

Francis, Tygwyn's sides shook also till the old fellow began to cough; but Kezia coloured as vividly as she had probably done on the memorable occasion alluded to.

"I'll be back directly—I must take my cough mixture," said Francis, hastily leaving the room.

Rees's memory vanished with him, and when he and Kezia were left alone he had nothing more to say. He had a comfortable glass of spirits and water, delicately flavoured with lemon, before him, and he began to stir it.

"Just right. Very well mixed—Francis, Tygwyn's Jemima," he muttered, glancing at Kezia, who was seated opposite him, all of a flurry and with crimsoned cheeks.

"Jemima is from home; she will be back to-morrow," said Miss Francis, slightly offended, alluding to an absent sister.

"Don't want her. Came to see you," said Rees, sipping his grog, for the farmers of those days were not teetotalers, though Rees, Manorgwyn never exceeded.

It was now Kezia's turn to have nothing to say, for she was a shy woman, and in love, if Rees was not. She began to make up the fire, and while nervously heaping on blocks of wood, a spark flew out and caught her white muslin apron. An inspiriting little flame was the consequence, which she was about to extinguish, to the danger of her hands, when Rees jumped up and took her in his arms. He had no intention, anterior or ulterior, but that of putting out the fire, whereas he kindled a new one, being himself suddenly all aflame.

"I came on purpose to marry you. Will you have me?" he said, boldly, when Kezia had managed to release herself.

"Thank you, Mr. Rees. Yes, if you please," she replied, gratefully, for had not the comfortable farmer been her life-long dream?

There is certainly no accounting for dreams, or, indeed, for proposals. Rees, Manorgwyn, could never account for his, and would probably have slept it off with his spirits and water had not Kezia had a father. Happily for her, he was not an absent man, and, returning just as the words we have quoted were spoken, he ratified them with his blessing.

The news soon spread far and wide that the "young couple" were engaged, and more jokes were made over those two commonplace words than filled Joe Miller's jest-book.

"That's my doing. Now I must keep master up to it," said Mally; and so she did.

No sooner was Rees preparing for his Sunday nap, after morning service and dinner, than Mally appeared with the words:

"It is time for you to be going to Tygwyn, master. You'll be liking to walk to evening church with Miss Francis; and the little mare's ready."

"What? Where? Who? Name o' goodness, let me alone, woman," grumbled Rees, obeying nevertheless.

By the time he reached Trefavon he had forgotten his mission, and rode into the yard of the Ap Shenkin Arms, exclaiming to the ostler, "What sort of market to-day, Joe?"

"You're forgetting, sir. It's Sunday. You'll be on your way to Tygwyn?" suggested Joe, demurely.

"Bless my soul, yes. I *was* forgetting," replied Rees, cantering off.

At last he got into the habit of riding once a week to Tygwyn and would probably have continued it to his dying day, but for

Kezia's father. He was for naming the wedding-day as soon as politeness permitted, and as Rees would not, and Kezia could not do this, he took it on himself.

"Suppose we say Friday, May the third?" he suggested, one evening, looking from Rees to Kezia.

"Settle it between you. Appointment the sixth. Monthly market the seventh. Sale the ninth. Board of Guardians the eleventh. Trefavon Fair the thirteenth," said Rees, consulting his pocket-book, while Kezia held her tongue, which somebody says is the wisest thing a woman can do. It certainly was in her case, for her father forthwith sent out invitations for a grand horse-wedding for Friday, May the third. In Wales, Friday is the lucky day for marriages.

On the eventful morning Mally was early at the farm, but her master was abroad before her. His wedding-suit was where she had laid it the previous evening, and she heard that he had not shaved. She sent Jeho in search, who found Rees, with a spade over his shoulder, looking at his crops in sunrise.

"You've got a fine day for your wedding, master," he said.

"Wedding, Jeho?" muttered Rees, turning slowly round, while the sun kindled his face rose-colour.

"Yes, master; you're going to be married this morning," said Jeho, who was stolid and matter-of-fact.

"Bless my soul, yes. Francis, Tygwyn's Jemima."

"Yes, sure, Miss Jemima is to be bridesmaid; and if you don't make haste your tailor and everybody will be here before you're ready."

The "tailor" is another word for the best man.

Rees began to run as fast as he could, and when he reached the farm out of breath, he exclaimed, "What's the matter, Mally? What brings you here so early?"

"What takes you out in that old coat, when there's a blue one with yellow buttons waiting up-stairs? Go you and shave directly," cried indignant Mally.

Before he was ready, an army of horsemen clattered into the yard, and uproariously besieged his citadel. Some began to partake of the sumptuous meal prepared by Mally and her aids in the great hall—others unceremoniously to help poor Rees to shave and dress—all to make the rafters tremble with their jollity. The bridegroom was kept well up to the mark amongst them, but he was not to be deprived of his breakfast.

"Better lay in plenty. We shall get nothing till the meeting's over," he remarked to his friends, who followed his example.

When they had satisfied appetites sharpened by May breezes, they all mounted their horses—Rees his best bay mare—and set off down the road full gallop. They took a circuitous route to avoid the town, and tore up and down hill and across country until they espied another party of equestrians galloping along the turnpike.

"Now's your time, Rees. Here she is!" shouted the young men, as they urged their horses through a rough lane bordered with hawthorn and primroses.

When they reached the turnpike road the bride and her party were ahead of them.

"Now, Rees, race for the bride," shouted his friends, and off they galloped, helter-skelter.

Rees got into the spirit of the chase, but they did not overtake Kezia and her party until they reached the outskirts of Trefavon. They entered the town en masse, well-nigh a hundred horses and their riders. But Rees forgot what was expected of him, and did not hurry on to possess himself of his bride: he was engaged in admiring the paces of a neighbour's horse, and bidding for him.

"Come you, Rees!" cried Francis, Tygwyn, arousing him with his whip to a sense of the situation.

He took Kezia from her horse, and she, leaning on his arm, gently impelled him towards the church. The others followed two-and-two, and were followed in turn by a crowd of spectators. The chancel and body of the church were soon nearly full. Rees, standing near the altar, looked about him enquiringly.

"What are we here for, my dear?" he whispered to Jemima, the bridesmaid.

"Why, you are going to be married, Mr. Rees," replied Jemima.

"To be sure. Come along, my dear," he said, holding out his hand to Jemima, who pushed Kezia towards him.

The clergyman was a friend of Rees, Manorgwyn's, and acquainted with his peculiarities. He therefore held him to his point during the marriage service, and when he appeared oblivious, recalled him by a whispered, "Repeat after me."

"Repeat after me," said the bridegroom aloud, glancing absently Kezia.

There was a general titter, and the "tailor" gave him a poke in his back.

In the vestry, before the register, he paused and hesitated.

"Write your name, man," said the clergyman.

"My name? What—what is it?" he asked, with a bewildered air.

"It used to be Matthew Rees. Perhaps it's Francis now you're married," suggested the best man, maliciously.

"Francis! To be sure," he repeated, and would have so signed himself, but for the parson.

The ceremony was, however, performed at last, and Kezia experienced the truth of the proverb, "All comes to those who can wait." Matrimony came to her after twenty-five years' expectancy, and she was content. So, in a manner, was Rees, who had never expected it at all.

They galloped back to Tygwyn side by side, with their friends

following, where they feasted and jested, and entertained all the country, until they set out again and galloped to Manorgwyn.

"I'm thankful it's over," were the bridegroom's words, as he entered his home and was greeted by Mally.

Kezia slipped into her place so naturally that at the end of a week he was heard to declare that he believed he had been married all his life, and at the end of a fortnight he was sure of it.

"I never forget anything now," he asserted, pointing to his new Memoria technica.

He was, nevertheless, occasionally oblivious when absent from her; a fact she realised thirteen days after the wedding. She accompanied him to Trefavon Fair, already alluded to, and it was agreed between them, as they bowled along in his dog-cart, that when he had finished his business, and she her shopping and calls, he would pick her up at Mr. Jones, the doctor's.

Trefavon Fair was unusually brisk that day, and Rees unusually busy. He had to meet so many people on all sorts of business that time wore on imperceptibly. Then he dined at the ordinary as usual, after which Jenkins, the lawyer, called him into his house, and he must needs have a glass of wine, or something stronger, with him, so that it was five o'clock before he could think of leaving the town. He got to the hotel at last, and having mounted his dog-cart, pushed through the crowds with difficulty.

"Why was I such a fool as to drive?" he ejaculated, as he nearly upset old Katto's little cart. "I wish I had the mare instead. I wonder if I've done everything. There's a trifle on my mind still. Dash me, if I'm not pretty sure to have forgotten something."

He rubbed his head and looked about him, while his horse picked his way through the crowds between the churchyard walls, instead of taking the street that led to the doctor's. As a rule, Dobbin had a better memory than his master, but he wasn't quite used to a mistress as yet. When they were out of the town, they went on at a brisk rate, Rees still rubbing his head, and repeating at intervals, "I'm sure I've forgotten something. What can it be?"

He had not found out when they reached home. He had dismounted and was in the passage, when Jeho exclaimed, "Where's missus?"

"That's it! I knew I had forgotten something," cried the abashed husband. "Put the little mare in and drive to Dr. Jones's and fetch her. If I go, may be I shall forget again; and I couldn't stand Jones the doctor's jokes. I ought never to have married."

Remark that he did not say, with many a Benedick, "I wish I had never married." On the contrary, he seated himself in his arm-chair by the fire, forgot his pipe, which was the one thing he never did forget, and thought disconsolately of his wife.

"What will she say? Will she scold for an hour and send me out of my mind, or will she sulk and be silent? That's what they

say the women do; and I daresay the men deserve it. I'm sure I do. I wonder when I lost my memory, and where I dropped it."

When Rees, Manorgwyn, arrived at this portion of his mental castigation he grew so confused that he would probably have forgotten Kezia again, had not the sound of wheels aroused him. He felt too much ashamed of himself to go out to meet her, but stared into the fire as if ignorant of her arrival. A peal of hearty laughter made him start and turn round. It was Kezia, looking so good-tempered and buxom that he laughed too, and rose instinctively.

"You will never hear the last of it. The doctor said you had forgotten me!" she exclaimed.

"I suppose I had; but I'll try never to forget you again. Let's spell opportunity."

They spelt it so loudly that the wainscot echoed, and from that time forth it is recorded that, thanks to his wife, he gradually picked up his memory.

"If we had married young I should never have lost it," said he;

"Better late than never," replied she.

UNDER FOUR EYES.

Sometimes you sing, and all at once the air
Is filled with wonder and a gracious beauty;
And sad thoughts flee, and men become aware
That work is prayer and life made fair by duty.
Sometimes you silent sit—a tender calm
Folds and envelopes you in a mantle queenly;
Your smiling is a soothing and a balm,
Till weary ones take up their load serenely.
But sometimes, best of all, you talk to me—
To me—a man who am so far below you;
You open my blind eyes that I may see,
And my dim thoughts I am made bold to show you.
You sing to all the world that all may hear;
You smile on all, and life becomes less lonely;
But when you speak your voice is for my ear—
Your speaking is for me, my own, mine only!

A BRAVE WIFE.

A BEAUTIFUL evening in New England. The season, early in May; time, in the years gone by.

Without the walls of a populous town stood a pretty house surrounded by its garden of flowers. The kitchens were built beyond it, stables beyond them, barns in the rear. A flourishing little place evidently.

In one of the upper rooms stood its mistress, Delia Walden: a young and pretty woman, who had been putting her two children to bed, and stayed to fold their clothes neatly afterwards, and to make the room tidy. A vexed expression sat on her usually smooth and pleasant face. It was caused by her two "helps" having both gone out that evening, leaving her to do the work.

Turning down her light silk dress, the skirt of which had been pinned up around her while she washed the children, and taking a last fond look at the little sleepers, Mrs. Walden ran down stairs. The front door stood open to the garden, and she went straight out at it. A lovely, balmy May evening. The moon had not yet risen, but some of the larger stars were beginning to peep out of the clear firmament; the late light still lingered in the western horizon. Advancing to the gate at the end of the path, that divided the green lawn, Mrs. Walden gazed down the road.

"Looking out for thy husband, Delia?"

The words came from Rachel Dawes, a motherly Quakeress, who lived next door, and was taking the evening air up and down the road in her large white sun-bonnet.

"Yes," said Delia. "He seems rather late to-night."

"Not more so than usual, is he?"

"Well, he has been late several times lately. I have been cross with him about it."

Mrs. Dawes put her motherly hand upon the young arm, which lay on the top of the low gate. "Don't thee do that," she said emphatically. "Nobody knows how men are tried in business but themselves. Robert Walden is a good man and a good husband. Did I see those two young girls o' thine go off, all smart just now, Delia?"

"Yes, tiresome animals!" impatiently assented Mrs. Walden, sore with her grievance. "They have both gone to a party at Patty's sister's, at Nevro; a 'hop,' if you'll believe me; it's what they called it."

"Well, there's no help for these things," said the placid Quakeress.

"None. Had I refused, they would most likely have gone in spite of me, and never come back. They are not bad servants, and I must make the best of it. I told Rose she was not obliged to go, though Patty did—leaving me alone all night."

"All night, does thee say?"

"They don't come back till morning. The dance is to last till breakfast time."

Saying good-night to her friend, Mrs. Walden went indoors, and struck a match to light the candles that stood on the mantel-piece in the parlour. There she saw her husband, stretched on the sofa.

"Robert," she exclaimed, "I did not know you were here." She supposed he was tired: it was so unusual to see him, a strong man, lying down.

"I came in some time ago. You were putting the children to bed."

"Yes! those two fine girls of ours are gone off to Nevro! and won't be home till goodness knows what hour to-morrow morning. In time to get their breakfasts, *they* said. I shall like to see them!"

Mr. Walden made no comment.

"I'm sure we seem to need four helps instead of two," went on Mrs. Walden, partly to herself, partly to her husband. "Our visitors did not leave till this afternoon; and, what with one thing and another, I am completely exhausted. They did go then, thank fortune! —though I believe they'd have stayed till to-morrow at half a word."

"It was you who invited them."

"I know I did. She is my cousin; and one must keep up family ties. But I did not know she'd bring all her three children, or stay five days instead of three. It's just like Joanna to do so! You have no idea, Robert, what my responsibilities are—keeping those two incapable girls to their work, and looking after my children, and entertaining as well. Your business troubles can be nothing to it."

"Nothing at all," quietly acquiesced Mr. Walden.

"And the Clappetons come to us to-morrow to spend the night," ran on Mrs. Walden. "And only fancy the pickle I should be in if Patty and Rose did not come back! And next Monday there'll be a heavy wash on; and Tuesday is Mrs. Plymouth's dance; and on Wednesday we begin cleaning; and—oh, I don't recollect the half. I wish I could run away into the heart of the Vermont woods, and stay there for a year!"

"Don't say that!" he cried, in a strange tone of pain.

"But I do say it; I often wish it," she returned, laughing. "I'm sure it would be a delightful change—the getting away from the toils and worries of civilised life. And now, Robert, you would like your tea"—as they called supper. "I'll go and see about it."

"Not for me," he answered. "I cannot eat or drink."

She looked round at him, moving one of the candles. His face was as one living anguish.

"What is it, Robert?" she asked, timidly. "Have I offended you? There was no harm, was there, in my jokingly wishing myself in the heart of Vermont?"

"Delia," he groaned, "you don't know what you are saying."

There was something in the tone in which these words were uttered that electrified Mrs. Walden. She started to her feet.

"What is the matter, Robert? You frighten me! Are you ill?"

"Worse than that," came the reply, in a voice so unnatural that Mrs. Walden began to tremble violently.

"Worse than that!" she echoed, kneeling down by the sofa. "Robert, you must tell me what you mean."

"I have kept it from you as long as I could—till I can keep it no longer," he sobbed—and really the catching of his breath sounded like sobs.

"Tell me! tell me!"

"I expect to be in gaol to-morrow. I am not sure I shall not be taken to-night."

"What do you mean? What have you done?" asked his wife, making a great effort to drive back the faintness that was coming over her.

"Done?" The syllable was not a question or an exclamation, but the intonation, which cannot be conveyed on paper, carried to the wife's mind an emphasis of reproach, self-accusation, and despair. "We have both been foolish, Delia."

"In what way?"

"*Lived beyond our means.*"

"It is for debt, then, that you fear to be taken! Only for debt! What a relief!" And she spoke quite happily in the release from fear. "I thought it was something dreadful."

"And what is that but dreadful?" he asked, reproachfully. "It involves disgrace."

"How has it come about?"

"The chief fault lies not with me, Delia, but with my late partner, Hart. He——"

"I told you not to take in that Hart, Robert," she vehemently interrupted. "I told you I did not like him."

"Well, he has ruined me. Entered into speculation of which I had no knowledge; and, when he could no longer stave off discovery, craftily decided to dissolve the partnership, which he could do by the original agreement, did it, and set sail for Europe, leaving me to battle with the trouble. I have been fighting it fiercely for weeks past, unsuccessfully; and now the storm has broken."

"Shall *you* have to bear the blame?"

"Assuredly: and the disgrace, and the responsibility, and the consequences. To-morrow will no doubt see me in gaol, Delia—unless I escape it."

"How escape it?"

"By running away. Those very Vermont woods you speak of have already suggested themselves as my refuge."

"Which would be the worse disgrace," she asked, after a pause: "the gaol, or the running away?"

"The gaol—in my opinion. Everything I possess my creditors will seize upon—but if they seize upon me also it is hard to say how long they will keep me incarcerated, or how complete my social ruin will be. For the sake of our children, for my own liberty, I think I shall go. Away there, with good luck, I may in time pay everyone."

"I will go with you, Robert."

"No."

"But I will. Vermont woods, indeed! that is not a bad thought! but let us talk it over calmly. Stay behind I shall not. We will go into the Vermont woods and begin life anew. I am equally to blame with you if we have lived extravagantly: I have been a thoughtless, careless woman."

"We *have* spent a greal deal, Delia, and that's the truth. For that cause alone I should get no mercy."

Mrs. Walden sighed. "This sudden blow makes me see life, myself, everything, so differently! I am ready to go with you anywhere, and give up all to the creditors; but there would be no benefit to any one in your going to gaol. The disgrace and punishment are sufficient without that. Let me think, Robert."

"Think of what?"

"Of the best means of getting away. We must go this night—I see that. The maids are not here; the moon will be bright: Robert, we will start in an hour."

"My dear, have you lost your senses?"

"Why no, I hope not. I shall need them all to arrange what there is to do."

"And what of the children?"

"Take them," shortly answered Mrs. Walden, in too decisive a tone to be contradicted. "Has anyone known of your difficulties, Robert?"

"Only Elijah Dawes. To tell you the truth, Delia, it was he—good, upright Quaker though he is—who first counselled me to run away. He thinks it the least evil of the two, and the surest one to satisfy the creditors in the end. You had better stay behind, wife; the Daweses will take care of you until I can send ——"

"Not for a day," she interrupted. "And there's no time to lose. Let me see—we shall want the plainest and strongest of our clothes, and a bag of provisions, and—I suppose you will have to take the two horses, Robert?"

"Of course—if you *do* go. When we are at a safe distance, I shall send them back to the creditors. Dawes has suggested all things, and will act for me here."

"The first thing, Robert, we must eat some supper: we shall need that. The next, we must prepare and start. The idea of your thinking to leave me! No. Where you go I go: I married you, you know, for better or for worse."

Near the stables, when Mr. Walden went out, stood his good friend, Quaker Dawes.

"I am here to help thee, friend. I reckon thee hast decided to start."

"Yes—and Delia also. She *will;* won't hear a word to the contrary. We shall have to take both horses. How far do you think we can go to-night—with the children?"

"Well, I never! It's just like a woman; and like Mrs. Walden, too! Well, I don't know but she's right, though we had laid out to look after her when thee wast gone. Well, there's no time to lose. I'll saddle the horses: the side-saddle on Dolly, I suppose. I'd not try to ride more than fifteen miles or so with the children to-night, friend. Stop somewhere when over the line, and rest a day or two before making up thy mind to anything. Drop me a letter if you two want anything of me, or any information I can give thee."

"I shall want you to send a trusty messenger to fetch back the horses, Dawes. They belong to my creditors now, you know; not to me."

"All right."

"And if prosperity ever comes to me again, I will remember you, the only true friend I have in this town," he added, with emotion.

While the horses were being saddled, Mrs. Walden was arousing and dressing the children.

"Dear mamma, where can we be going?" said Marian, all in wonder. "We need not wake so early as this to go to grandma's. Why do we go in the night? Bobby, wake up: we are going out in the night. I think it's to grandma's."

"Never mind, dear, where it is. I tell you papa and I are going to take you on a little journey. You must not talk; it would hinder time. I should be very sorry to leave you and Bobby behind because you were not ready."

The start took place—the flight by moonlight. Elijah Dawes silently grasped a hand of each. The little girl rode with her father: Bobby with his mother. Bobby, hardly awake, fell asleep again on her lap. Soon they left the town and suburbs behind them.

The moon had not long risen. It came up from behind a hill, beautiful, mysterious; so near to our world compared with other heavenly bodies, yet so far away!

"That moon has looked upon a great deal worse sorrow than ours, Robert," spoke the wife, who was bravely hiding her own dismay and distress. "Here we are, all of us together; and we are not running away as guilty criminals. No, no, Robert; I can never think that. It is very different. Are we not giving up all to them, except our children ——"

"Except myself," he interrupted.

"True. But *you* could bring them no benefit. Your being in

prison would not give them a cent more than they have; no, not though they kept you there for life. As it is, you are going to work to pay them all in time. They will heap hard names upon us—and I feel that we ought to have been more careful."

"You take a bright view of the future, I see that, Delia," he remarked. "It is best you should; but you have little idea of what lies before us: the hardships, the labour, the isolation."

"Perhaps God will lighten it to us."

"Perhaps. You and I have not taken Him much into account yet, I fear."

Too true: her conscience told her so. "Robert," she said, softly, after a little pause, "suppose we begin everything anew? Let us ask our Heavenly Father to take our case into His hands. Let Him map out our way for us, and let us from this night strive to submit ourselves to Him, asking Him to undertake for us in all things. Our Bible has been too much neglected; but, as I took it up to put it in the portmanteau to-night, it came open, and I read, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'"

There was another pause.

"That was rather singular, Robert, was it not?"

"Aye."

The road they had taken lay through a wood: the moonlight came flickering through the green branches. From the heart of the trees beyond, the voice of some strange night-bird reached them.

"You are right, Delia," Robert Walden replied, in a subdued tone. "The world, with its pleasures and its cares, has deluded us into forgetting our dependency. If we ever have a hearth and table of our own again, we will try to remember these things."

Clear of the wood again, the two horses trotted on, side by side, and the riders were silent until several miles were passed, and even then the words spoken were scarcely more than an inquiry and the necessary response. Mrs. Walden would acknowledge no weariness, she could ride as well as he could, she said; so all night the travellers bore on with the sleeping children in their arms, and before sunrise they had passed beyond fear of pursuit.

For my story, reader, as I have said, belongs to the olden days in New England. The telegraph wire, the railroad, and even the present quick postal arrangements, were entirely unknown. Had any visionary brain prophetically hinted at either of the two former, it would have been considered almost more preposterous than the tales told of in the

"goodly time
Of good Haroun Alraschid."

Thus a night's ride had put the Waldens beyond the fear of pursuit.

But that was not all. They had a long, long way to go yet—and they wanted breakfast. Mrs. Walden had provided bountifully, for the necessities of one day at least, for her pantry was never empty of good things, and now, when the sun came up, they bivouacked in a wood beside the road, through which a clear brook ran. The horses drank from the stream, and then were fed from the bag of oats which had been hung to the saddle by good old Elijah Dawes, and the breakfast of bread and butter, cold meat, and cakes, was spread on a log overlaid with a large napkin.

"And here's a bottle of tea," said Mrs. Walden. "I did not forget that. It is cold: but cold tea is better than none."

"Oh how funny this is, mamma!" said Marian, all in delight. "I like it a deal better than the dining-room at home."

"Oh see! see, Mary!" exclaimed little Robert, who had discovered a crimson-crested woodpecker on a tree close by.

The wonders of the wood were better than a show: and, somehow, Mr. and Mrs. Walden took heart from the rapturous mood of their children.

"As long as we have health and strength, Robert, there's no need to despair," she whispered.

We will not attempt to follow minutely the journey through the unbroken woods which they soon entered; but it were no doubt well worth some little loss of gear, aye, some great relinquishment of luxury and fashion, such as they were, even in those days, to spend a portion of one's life in the freshness of the May forest. The soft, pale-green leaves not fully formed, the grace and beauty of the moss of many hues, the varied colours of almost bare branches, from the crimson of the red willow to the chalky white of the birch; the mottled maple, the brown butternut, budding each in its curious and wonderful way. All these mingled with the dark, rich evergreens, and were the perch and resting-place of hundreds of little singers, so full of vitality, of joy, of love, that it would seem an untaught savage might thereby guess at the gracious Heart and loving Hand that planned such happiness and upheld such glorious beauty—that fed these sweet singers now making the air melodious with their harmony.

The May forest was rich with spicy odours of hemlock and fir, with wafts of delicate fragrances from hidden flowers. For here blossomed, white and showy, the shadow flower, and there trailed, and hid, and peeped out again from the dead, dry leaves underfoot, the dear, sweet pilgrim-flower, lovely enough for Paradise. To the two bright-eyed children it seemed a very Eden: they thought papa and mamma had brought them for a treat.

"The wood is all joyous with life," thought Mrs. Walden, as they rode on again. The brown-red doe yonder was leading her speckled twins; hares, and partridges, and quails, and burrowing wild creatures moved, with but little fear, about the horses' feet, and the mother's heart grew braver and stronger. She would care for her

little ones and succour them, taking lesson from the wild maternal instinct that she witnessed in the forest, and the same Father would gather all together under the shadow of His wing, and feed them from His open Hand.

Not but what her courage sank as they went on, and on, and on, seemingly interminably. But now, when her brow was getting moist with deferred hope, her voice faint, they came in view of a house. Actually a house! It was that of an adventurous settler. As they rode up, a man—the settler himself—stood at the door, an axe over his shoulder. They alighted, and were received with a most hearty welcome.

"Mother," called he, running back to the door, which was only a faded bed-quilt hanging with all the grace of tapestry against the opening, "Mother, here are travellers."

A kindly-looking, motherly woman immediately appeared. She put Delia in mind of Mrs. Dawes, only that she was years younger. A wide-eyed infant lay in her arms, two flaxen-haired children, also wide-eyed with astonishment, were hanging to her apron. She was more glad to see them than tongue could tell. One must live in these solitary places, beyond the ordinary footsteps of man, to know what joy the sight of a traveller brings.

The settler was one James Rittering, who, with his wife and little ones, had come out a year or two ago. So hospitable were these entertainers, so hearty was the cheer, that before the evening was over Mrs. Walden caught herself feeling quite at home. Her husband wrote a letter to the Quaker, and Rittering rode with it the next day (Sunday) to the distant post office.

On Monday morning Mr. Walden, leaving his wife and children behind, started forth with the axe and gun, with which he had not forgotten to provide himself. He took with him a week's provision of dried venison and corn cakes, with which the settler's wife provided him, also some valuable advice given by James Rittering, and a faithful dog. With these he marched onwards to fix upon a favourable place in the forest, there to hew himself out a settlement.

In those days the American government gave whatever wild land the adventurer chose to clear, as the reward of his industryand energy, and so Mr. Walden was sure, as long as his right arm failed him not, of a spot on earth which he might call his own. He crossed a branch of the Onion River, and found there a location to his mind. Here he felled trees for nearly a week, making a booth for himself of hemlock boughs for his dormitory. Saturday at noon he took up his axe and started to retrace his way by the marked trees—for he had gashed the trees, as he went, for a guide. It was a long way to go, to be sure, but ——

Suddenly Robert Walden was startled by the appearance of a woman. She was crossing his clearing. Another glance, and his heart leaped. It was his own wife!

"Delia! how came you here?"

"I followed your marked trees, to be sure."

"And you came all this way, brave little heart, to go back with me!"

"Not at all, Robert. I am come to stay with you. You must be wearied out with your labour, and need a rest. Let us spend the Sabbath in these glorious woods, and Monday morning we will both go to work; yes, though I may not be able to cut down trees, I can help, I know, in many little ways. Where there's a will there's a way, you know. The children? Oh, I left them behind with Mary Rittering; they are as happy as the day's long. And see, I have brought a fresh bag of provisions, and you shall kill game, and we will strike a fire and roast some meat."

Robert Walden fell more deeply in love with the pretty woman before him, her cheeks aglow with exercise, and her hair about her face, than ever he had done with the girl Delia Fane at quilting party, dance, or appleparing; but he turned from her for a few moments, for the sun, or something else, had moistened his eyes.

"You are a brave woman, Delia."

"Did you think I came out to be an encumbrance to you, Robert? Better I had stayed behind with Mrs. Dawes than that. And I have something to tell you. Elijah Dawes came up yesterday for the horses, and is gone again."

"Elijah Dawes!"

"Yes; he had your letter, and thought it safer to come himself: besides, he knew the way. People are raging rampant, he says, at your having got away, and all our dear household things are being turned topsy turvey, and the sale is to be next week. They think I ought to be hung, I expect, for having such good dresses. That new pink I got for Mrs. Plymouth's ball ought to sell well; it has never been on."

Robert Walden made no comment. He was picturing his once happy home.

"And Rachel Dawes sent me a few useful things from their own store," added Mrs. Walden; "she knew we could not have brought away much. How good they are, she and her husband! What a friend Elijah has been to you, Robert!"

"Aye, he has been that," answered Robert Walden. "I'll tell you now, Delia, what I have not told you before—that he is one of our largest creditors. Hart took him in."

The circle that this new settler had already begun to clear was immense. He felled the trees so that the top of one, falling, touched the trunk of the next, making a hasty fence for as much land as he thought he could ever manage to clear, and it was a good many acres, I assure you. Then the trees were cut within the circle, and there was wild work among the poor little birds' nests, but the war was with the gaunt wolf, hunger; and the crash of these little homes could not be helped.

These trees were burnt to ashes; there was a better hut made, and, at the end of two or three weeks, they went back for their children, bringing wheat and corn to sow. It was hard work for the unaccustomed hands of Walden, but the muscles grew inured to it. The woods grew warmer, and, before the cold weather came, a spacious log house had been built, and there was corn harvested, and wheat and dried venison hung in the corner of the room, and bears' meat was lying frozen under the snow, easily made ready for use. And a cow was bought, and two or three sheep came, the produce of the first wheat sold. And Delia, in her independence, was a happy woman, always at work or instructing her children.

They prospered. The hand of the diligent maketh rich.

A few years, and the farm was fertile and fair to look upon, lying on the banks of a mad little river, that went rushing into a larger one. Sons were born in the forest, and labourers on the farm increased. The creditors had long ago been paid in full, interest and principal; everything the Waldens touched seemed to turn to gold. Mrs. Walden did no rough work now: she had women and men servants.

Emigrants from Massachusetts and New Hampshire were attracted thither, and the Walden farm, large enough for a city, was pieced out to the settlers at a good price. A flourishing town started up. Mr. Walden was a father to the new comers, their never-tired referee, their adviser and friend. His sons and daughters, a goodly show of them, grew up around him, worthy, respected, honest as he was, with the same simple dependence on the guidance of God.

His fame, as an upright man and a man of substance, travelled far and near. He was made Judge of the probate court; other honours were pressed upon him. The town bore his name; it still stands and flourishes in the green heart of Vermont. You need not, however, get a map to look it out, for I have not given you Judge Walden's real name, only his veritable history.

Once good old Quaker Dawes and his wife, Rachel, travelled to the large farm, and spent a whole summer there. Ah! no need now to conceal from *their* townspeople the place of retreat of the Waldens, or that they were about to stay with them! All that trouble has passed away for ever.

"We have had plenty of hard work and little crosses and cares to contend with since we first settled here," observed Mrs. Walden, one afternoon that she was sitting with her guests under the trees in the orchard, "but no real drawback from the first. All things have been prosperous and happy. So much so that at times I marvel whence it all comes—how it can be."

"I can tell thee, Delia," replied the old lady, whose sun-bonnet, shading her placid face, was whiter and larger than ever. "The blessing of the Lord: it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."

AFTER THE SEASON.

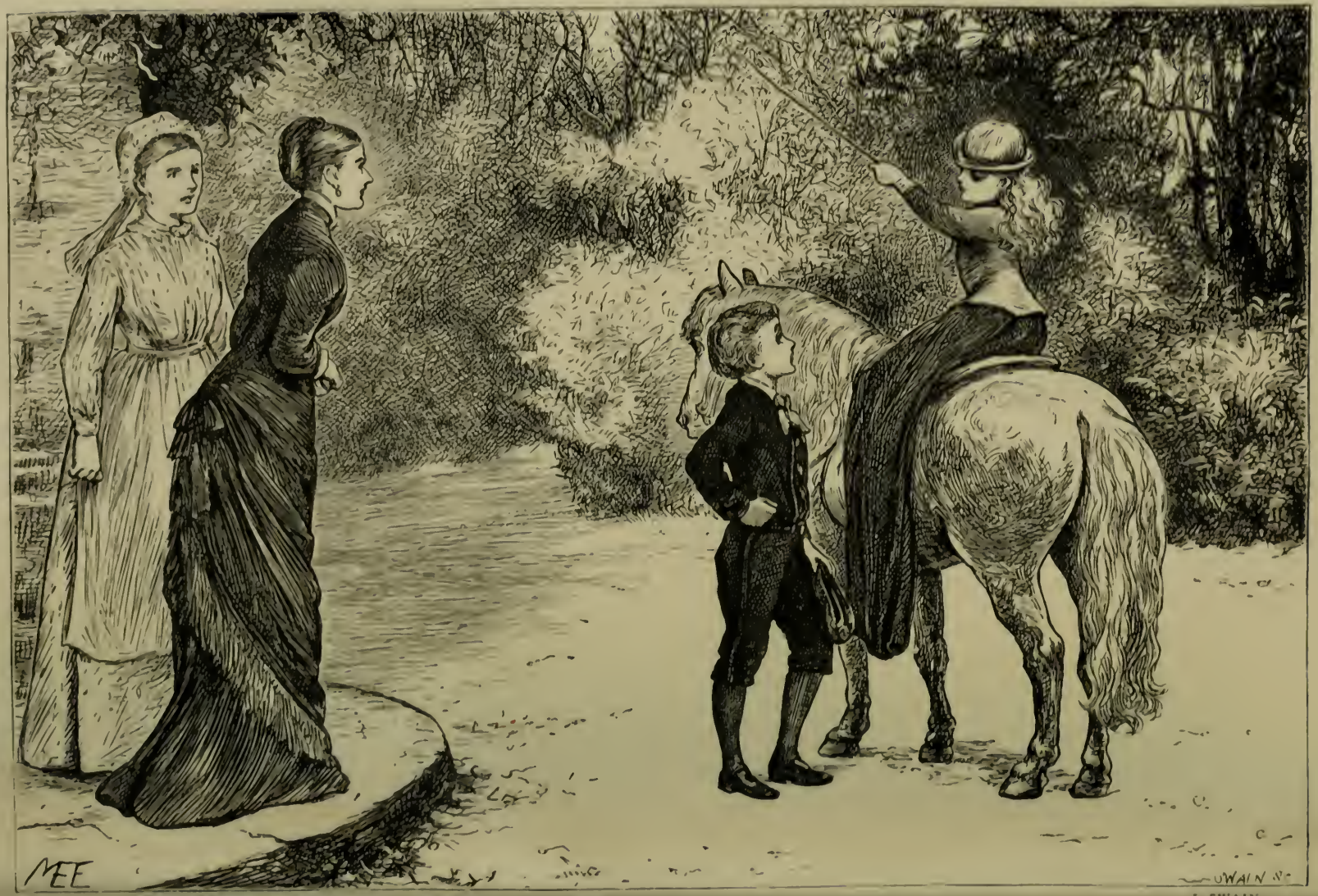
"Left town to day!" So here must end
Our friendship of a summer's growing.
Monday she bade me call her "friend,"
And never mentioned she was going!
The season's done: now Rhine, or Rhone—
Or Irish lake—or Scottish heather:
Our friendship to the breezes blown
As lightly as a flying feather.

Our friendship!—fruit of morning calls
And kettledrum's luxurious leisure:
Of waltzes at a dozen balls,
And all the round of London pleasure.
Friendship is all we can afford,
For I'm a younger son of seven;
And Kate must take a captive lord
Back with her, when she goes to Devon.

One night I cloaked her at the play,
And kept her hand too long, a minute,
Then heard her, as she drove away,
"Dear aunt, of course there's nothing in it!"
I'd kissed it ere I let it go;
She laughed, "That's more than I intended!
We're to be always friends, you know."
Always!—and now our friendship's ended!

The flowers we tended all the spring
May bear, unheeded, rose or thistle;
The bullfinch that I taught to sing
Greets me with melancholy whistle.
I know you only spoke, my dear,
The words politeness glibly utters.
Good-bye! your house looks dull and drear;
Pull down the blinds, put up the shutters!

G. B. Stuart.


MEE
J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXV.

BEANS AND BACON.

BOWLING along to Pomeroy Abbey, on the day following the commotion already told of, went Mrs. Wylde in her well-appointed chariot attended by her servants. The high wind had gone down; the October day was fair and calm.

Like Father Andrew, Mrs. Wylde's bulk increased with years. She was now a very large lady indeed; and her fate in this respect appeared to be so indisputable that she was fain to accept it *as* fate and cease to struggle against it. Mrs. Wylde was not less addicted to fine plumage than of old. Her attire this morning was a judicious mixture of violet and white satin; the gown violet, the bonnet white. Her comely face, shaded within its array of lace and feathers, was somewhat less comely than usual. At any rate, less easy; for it wore an expression of anxious perplexity.

In distress or trouble, a young woman naturally turns to her mother; for sympathy, if not always for refuge. Mrs. Pomeroy had passed a most wretched night; her maid, Theresa, having slept on a sofa in the same apartment, for she dreaded to be alone. Her bound-up hands gave her some pain; her mental discomfort gave her more; and when breakfast was over, she despatched Bridget to the White House to ask her mother to come to her.

Be you very sure Bridget did not fail to make use of the opportunity. Five minutes after she entered, Mrs. Wylde was in possession of the whole story: the dead Lord of Pomeroy had "come again," and was terrifying the whole abbey out of its propriety.

"I thought nothing less at first, ma'am, but that it was Mr. Rupert," confessed Bridget, dropping her voice, knowing that to her mistress's mother she was safe in whispering the dangerous suspicion: "and a fine fright it put me into, lest he should be seen. For we all know what might come of *that*."

"You had seen—this same appearance—for a week past?" returned Mrs. Wylde, that one avowal having made a strong impression on her.

"Every blessed night since yesterday was a week, ma'am, had I seen some stir in the haunted room. Now and again I caught a glimpse of a tall figure; and I could only believe it to be Mr. Rupert. It never occurred to me to think of the dead lord."

"Are my daughter's hands cut badly?" resumed Mrs. Wylde, after a pause.

"Well yes, ma'am, rather so. But Mr. Norris says it might have been worse. I left him dressing them this morning."

Dismissing the woman with a message that she would be at the abbey in the course of the morning, Mrs. Wylde sat on to revolve the news. And the conclusion she came to was not agreeable.

Supernatural appearances held no place in Mrs. Wylde's belief. That Guy, Lord of Pomeroy, should return to trouble the earth after having been decently buried away below it, she held to be most unreasonable. But she did fear very much, just as Leolin did, that it might be the wanderer, Rupert.

"And how frightfully imprudent of Alice (believing such) to go up after Rupert to the west tower! Nothing pleasant could come of that. Alice did it with a good motive of course; to warn him, as Bridget says, and it was kind of her to risk it—but if the news got abroad what would the neighbourhood say? Better, a great deal better, that Alice should have seen her husband's ghost than met Rupert—that is, fancied it; it could have been nothing but fancy. But if it was in truth Rupert up there—and he were to be discovered, and taken—what a dreadful catastrophe it would be! Not only for himself and the Pomeroy family, but for Alice; for it would recall to the public mind the nearly forgotten scandal of nine years ago."

These were the reflections that were running through Mrs. Wylde's mind and clouding her face as she drove to Pomeroy. She found Alice lying on a sofa in one of the front rooms, Theresa sitting at work at the window.

"I dare not be alone, mamma, after the horrors of last night," murmured Alice, as she sent the maid away. "You have heard, I suppose?"

"Yes, child; Bridget has told me. But it is very ridiculous of you to be frightened. Let me look at your hands."

"There is nothing to see but cuts. Mr. Norris said the bandages were not to be touched."

"Quite right, I daresay. And now tell me, Alice, how you could be so imprudent as to go up to that west tower?"

"I did it under a misapprehension," said Alice, dropping her voice. "I thought that it was Rupert come back. Bridget said it was he."

"And if it had been Rupert!—all the more reason for your keeping away," spoke Mrs. Wylde, unable to drop the severity out of her voice.

"I went to warn him to escape, nothing more; I should not have stayed a minute. His being there—if it had been he—was so frightfully hazardous."

"All the same, you should not have gone. You might have sent Bridget. You had had enough, one would think, of going up to the west tower nine years ago."

Alice burst into tears. "It is generous of you, mamma, to bring up that to me!"

"Because you are so very incautious, Alice. You and Rupert Pomeroy must be as far divided as are the two poles—and one would suppose your own good feeling would teach you that."

"I did it for the best," urged Alice. "There was no one else to go but me. As to Bridget, she would not have gone alone to the west tower to save her life. Think what it would be for us all, as well as for himself, if he were taken."

"Well, it is a good thing that nothing worse has come of it—that there was nothing worse to come. I hope you are now convinced that it was not Rupert Pomeroy."

"Ay, indeed. It was foolish of me to admit the idea—and of Bridget too. He would not be likely to venture here. And how could he have got into the rooms?"

"Don't you take up any fancy again so wildly ridiculous," spoke Mrs. Wylde sharply: for she had no intention of allowing her daughter to know what she suspected—that it must really be Rupert who was in the west tower.

"But oh, mamma, when I saw—what I did see, I—I—I cannot talk of it," she added, breaking off with a shudder. "You know—you have heard—that my husband appeared to me."

"I know that you must have been in a highly excited and nervous state to imagine anything of the sort," corrected Mrs. Wylde. "No wonder: you had been in the chapel the best part of the long day, and made a fast-day of it into the bargain. When the brain is highly-wrought from physical want and weariness, it is apt to play us strange tricks."

"Mother, it was no delusion. That I saw my husband last night," she solemnly added, "I will stake my soul."

"Hush!" said Mrs. Wylde.

"He appeared to me in the spirit," added Alice, lifting one of her damaged hands in her earnestness, and letting it rest on the arm of Mrs. Wylde. "I wonder I did not die there and then. Were I ever

to see it again when alone, I should die. It was only my fainting away that saved me."

"Are you a child, Alice, that you should fancy these things?"

"Not to me only did he appear but to others," went on Alice—for it is well known that there's nothing like opposition to bring out persistency. "Bridget saw him at the west window; Lady Anna saw him there. And when the servants went up afterwards to lock up the rooms—you have heard in what way they were startled, mamma, by seeing an awful figure bearing down upon them?"

"I have heard that they say so."

"What figure could that have been but his?"

Mrs. Wylde did not answer this time. In her own mind she believed it to be another's. A living figure, not a dead one.

"Jeffs declares he recognized the lord; he saw all his features—including the lip. No one who knew him well could be mistaken in his appearance, mother. And surely you are no stranger to the reports that have been whispered ever since his death! The abbey has been racked with them."

"Well, Alice, have it your own way."

"I wish there was any other way to have it; but you must know there is not," sighed Alice.

Mrs. Wylde fell into a fit of musing: she was naturally a shrewd, far-seeing woman. That nothing she could urge would shake her daughter's faith in this supernatural appearance, was evident: and she began to reflect that, of the two evils, it was better to let her rest in the belief; ay, in spite of the fear and torment it induced; than that she should have her doubts directed to the only feasible explanation—Rupert.

"Alice," she resumed, "I have never seen a ghost myself, and that makes me a sceptic. I have heard that some people do see such things; that they are so constituted; and so—we will drop the subject. I came here intending to take you home with me. Will you come?"

"What, with these lame hands! I could not go out to-day, mamma."

"It will be better for you to come to me altogether, Alice."

"Altogether! Why, mamma,-what do you mean?"

"Listen, Alice. This old abbey is a hot-bed of superstition. It was always noted for it, but it has grown worse of late years. The very atmosphere teems with superstitious discomfort; the servants are given over to it. My opinion is that they employ their leisure hours in inventing marvels, and then frighten themselves into the belief that they are real. It is no longer a desirable home for you—you shall come back to me."

Alice shook her head. "You are very kind, mamma; you mean well; but nothing would induce me to leave the abbey. My interests lie within it."

"What interests?"

"Mary's interests: and hers are mine. There are people living who would be capable of destroying them; I must be here to protect them."

Mrs. Wylde scarcely understood; and Alice continued.

"Mary shall sometime be Lady of Pomeroy; I have made my mind up to that. Her father was the lord, she shall in her turn be the lady."

"By what means would you make her such?"

"By her marriage with young Rupert."

Mrs. Wylde positively shrank at the words. She had had enough of scheming, herself, when she schemed to make this, her own daughter, Lady of Pomeroy by her marriage with Guy. What had come of it!

"Oh Alice, don't plan!" she urged, her voice taking quite a wailing tone. "Don't, don't! Be content to leave things to the good care of Heaven.—And they are both but children yet."

"Of course: we cannot act against Heaven," returned Alice, more pointed indifference in her manner than her mother liked to see. "But—to return to the question. This is my home, mamma, and I assure you I have no intention of quitting it."

"Only for two or three weeks, then; for two or three weeks, Alice! Until this excitement shall have worn away."

Alice rather wondered at her mother's persistency—she seemed quite agitated. "Thank you, mamma, but it cannot be. When my hands are better I will bring Mary and spend a long day with you."

Upon taking her departure, Mrs. Wylde saw the French governess in the study, and stepped in. Mademoiselle de Garonne seized on the opportunity to speak of the previous night's disturbance, confessing that it had made her feel uncomfortable. She did not like "revenants."

"But I don't believe a word of it," cried Mrs. Wylde. "Servants are so ignorant on these subjects, so superstitiously fanciful. You must know that, mademoiselle."

"As a rule, they are," admitted mademoiselle, speaking in English for the benefit of Mrs. Wylde, who was no French scholar. "But this that was seen last night—it was not only the servants who saw it, but Mrs. Pomeroy and Lady Anna. I admit that I never saw a revenant myself; I confess that I hardly know whether to believe in such appearances or not: but I must say that to live where one may be subjected to see one is rather unpleasant."

"You put yourself at ease, mam'selle; don't think at all about it," advised Mrs. Wylde in a reassuring tone. "I'd stake this pearl brooch of mine that nothing will appear to you."

"Thank you; indeed I hope not. But, to pass myself out of the question," continued the governess, "it is not well that Miss Mary should hear of these things; not well. The impressionable mind of a child should be cautiously guarded from such ideas."

"I fully agree with you in that, mam'selle."

"We had hardly begun the devoirs this morning when Miss Mary

interrupted them to ask whether I had seen the revenant. Madame Wylde, this ought not to be. In spite of all my care, she may grow up a very model of superstition."

"That shall not be if I can hinder it," concluded Mrs. Wylde. "Good morning to you, my dear mam'selle."

Passing down the stairs and out at the gateway, Mrs. Wylde made a sign to her carriage not to follow her, and walked round the abbey towards Father Andrew's. His little house was at the far side of the chapel. Old Marget said her master was at home, and unceremoniously ushered the visitor into the little sitting-room, where sat the priest at his early dinner.

"Beans and bacon, my favourite dish," said he in his jolly, hospitable manner. "Will you take some, Mrs. Wylde; there's plenty. It's not often that she gives it me."

Mrs. Wylde thanked him and declined. She entered at once upon the errand that had brought her, the priest turning from the table to listen.

"I want you to use your influence with my daughter to come to my house for a time!" said Mrs. Wylde, after some little conversation, chiefly touching the previous night, had passed. "One might as well try to shake that abbey down"—pointing her delicately-gloved hand towards the window—"as shake her belief in the fancy that her husband appeared to her. It is pitiable to see her—casting her eyes in fear into this corner and that. She would be so much better at my house, father."

"So she would," assented the priest.

"But she won't come; she won't listen to me: nothing will induce her, she says, to quit the abbey. Do you think you could prevail upon her?"

"I'll try," said the priest. "But—once Mrs. Pomeroy takes a notion into her head, you can't get it out again. You can't coerce her. She is fond of her own will, you see: she's like a Pomeroy for that."

Mrs. Wylde dropped her voice, looking round to make sure that the door was closed against Marget's ears; though, indeed, the old woman could be heard clattering her saucepans about in the kitchen.

"*She ought to come*, Father Andrew; she ought not to remain at the abbey just now. Should it in truth be Rupert Pomeroy up in those west rooms, hiding there for refuge, it is better that she should not find it out. There's no knowing what chivalrous thing she might be attempting by way of aiding him. Nothing unseemly; no, of course not; I don't mean that; no one could fear that for her now: but, give but the slightest loophole for public gossip, and all the old scandal, that I am sure, poor thing, she has been trying her best to live down, would be raked up again."

"But what can induce you to surmise that it is Rupert?" objected the priest. "It is no more Rupert than it's me. With all his lack of

caution, he would not put his head into the hangman's noose. I said as much to Leolin Pomeroy last night."

"Does he fear it is Rupert?"

"He did. Against all the laws of common sense."

"Then what do you think it was that they did see. The lord's ghost?"

Father Andrew had surreptitiously taken a mouthful of beans, and the question made him laugh till he choked. Marget heard the noise in the kitchen.

"It was nothing but the high wind," said he when he had recovered himself. "That's what I think. Why, I feared my roof here would have been blown off. The wind startled them to begin with, and they conjured up the rest. They are always ready primed for seeing ghosts on the seventeenth of October."

"And what an improper place the abbey is just now for the child!" resumed Mrs. Wylde—"all these ghostly tales floating in it. Mademoiselle de Garonne has just spoken to me: Mary has been asking her if she saw the revernon last night—or whatever the French name for ghost is. For the child's sake, Alice ought not to keep her there."

Father Andrew nodded assent. "Have you suggested that phase of the matter to your daughter?"

"No; to say the truth it had not occurred to me. But I will suggest it. The child knows all about last night, mademoiselle says: she is just one of those children that you can't keep things from. You must talk to Mrs. Pomeroy yourself, father."

"I will," said the priest. "I'll see her to-day."

Back started Mrs. Wylde for the abbey, leaving the good priest to his beans and bacon. Old Jerome was standing at the keep door as she passed. She stopped to speak to him.

"Have you heard this nonsense that they are talking—about last night?" she presently asked. And the old man's very lips turned white as he answered that he *had* heard it.

"He is as full of superstition as are the rest," thought Mrs. Wylde. And she continued her way to the abbey, and re-opened the conference with her daughter.

But no. Mrs. Pomeroy, to use her mother's words, was harder than adamant. She perfectly recognized the justice of the representation as regarded Mary, and said she would send the child to the convent to be out of the way; but she would not stir from the abbey herself.

As Mrs. Wylde, vexed and disappointed, was finally passing out to her carriage (pushing by a group of maids in the gate-way, who were stealthily gazing at the shattered casement of the west tower) she saw Leolin Pomeroy coming round from the path that led to the rocks. On the impulse of the moment she turned aside and spoke to him.

"What a disagreeable affair this is, Mr. Pomeroy, that they are saying has happened—about your poor brother Guy. He *could* not have been seen, could he? The thing does not stand to reason."

Every haughty line in Leolin's face grew more haughty at the abrupt address. He had never taken cordially to Mrs. Wylde, any more than he had to her daughter: that she should presume to speak of this *to him* tried his temper.

"There's Alice nearly out of her mind with it," continued Mrs. Wylde, hardly waiting for him to answer. "It is so very absurd. I fear we must look to a more tangible fear than that of ghosts."

"What do you mean, madam?" asked Leolin.

"What I fear is, that it must be Rupert," spoke Mrs. Wylde, her voice sinking to the veriest whisper. "Father Andrew says no: but I cannot come to any other conclusion."

In any dread that may be privately haunting us, how greatly that dread may be augmented by a single word of confirmation, spoken by another, we all too well know. Leolin despised Mrs. Wylde, deemed it little less than a piece of insolence for her to have mentioned the subject to him at all: but nevertheless her opinion painfully impressed him, strengthening the fear which he had been striving all the morning to drive away. He would not let this be seen; he turned the subject off with almost a jest, changing his tone to one of civility, as he walked with her to hand her into her carriage.

She drove off, nodding to him. Leolin lifted his hat with a smile, and then put it on to cover a brow of perplexity and pain.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WITH MR. HILDYARD.

In one of the most exclusive of our West-end clubs, amidst its brilliant gas lights, the warmth of its fires, and its sociability, sat Leolin Pomeroy. He had arrived in London some two hours before, had dined at his hotel; and now, though the night was getting on, had come to "take a look in" at his club before going to rest. Very few members were there: as a rule, the great world is out of town in October.

"Going to make anything of a stay?" asked one of the friends he was talking with, the Duke of St. Ives.

"A day, or so."

"Your visits are always flying ones, Pomeroy. How is your wife? Better?"

"Yes, much better. How did you know she was ill?"

"Essington told me so the other day when he dropped in here. He seemed concerned about her."

"But Essington's not in town, is he?"

"They are all in town. Halting here for a week before they go on to Germany. Cardine's in trouble again, I fancy."

"No doubt: Cardine's seldom out of it," remarked Leolin.

"It must try his father."

"Yes. Were I Lord Essington, I should make short work of it—leave him to his own devices."

The Duke of St Ives, good-hearted as ever, shook his head to this. "A great many fathers do get tried in the same way, I fear. One can't help feeling for one's own son, you see, Pomeroy. Look at Winchester."

"Scamp!" briefly ejaculated Leolin. "Has he been heard of lately?"

"Not that I know of. By the way, yes. Grane, coming home through Paris the other day, met him there."

But these items of gossip do not concern us, and we must hasten on.

Leolin Pomeroy had remained so deeply imbued with the impression that it was Rupert who had been seen in the west wing, as to become intolerably uneasy. The whole day after his brief interview with Mrs. Wylde he had brooded over the fear, striving in vain to discard it; at evening, calling Father Andrew to be his companion, he went into the wing and made a search of the rooms: but they found nothing. After a night of torment, Leolin started for London to put the matter before Mr. Hildyard and get his opinion—which opinion seemed, by the frequency of these visits, to be to Leolin the panacea for all his ills.

Breakfast over in the morning, Leolin went to Lincoln's Inn, and asked for Mr. Hildyard. But it was the partner, Mr. Prael, who came to him.

"I am too early, I suppose," remarked Leolin. "Hildyard's not here yet."

"He has not been here for three or four days now, Mr. Pomeroy," was the lawyer's answer. "I doubt whether he will ever be able to come again."

"Is he worse?"

"He has grown rapidly worse. I do fear we may not long have him with us. Can I do anything for you?"

"I am so sorry: I am truly sorry!" lamented Leolin. "He did look very ill when I last saw him—and that's not a week ago; but I had no idea it was so serious as this. Thank you; no, I don't think you can: you do not understand our affairs, I fancy. I wonder whether Mr. Hildyard would be able to see me?"

"I daresay he would. I was with him yesterday for a couple of hours, talking over business matters. You can but try."

Leolin could not intrude thus early upon one who was sick; but at twelve o'clock he made his way to Russell Square, sent in his card, and was admitted. At his desk, in a small study lined with books, apparently sorting old letters, sat Mr. Hildyard, worn, grey, and

shrunken. He silently took the hand held out by Leolin, and kept it for some moments.

"I am so very sorry to see you like this," spoke Leolin, whose heart was aching. Never in all his life had he seen anybody so changed in a space of time that might be counted by hours.

"Ay. When the end sets in with a will, it makes quick work with some of us," was the answer. "But I am somewhat better to-day. What has brought you up again so soon?"

Leolin drew a chair near, bent forward, and entered upon his tale. The lawyer listened in silence, his elbow on the table, his hand partly shading his face. A smile crossed his lips when Leolin spoke of what had been seen in the west tower, and what it was supposed to be.

"A ghost! Your brother Guy's ghost? How silly people are!"

"Ever since Guy died, there has been uneasiness amid the servants on that same score," spoke Leolin—who had never disclosed so much before.

"Uneasiness on *what* score?"

"What they maintain—what they say is, that Guy 'comes again.' Joan, I am sorry to say, puts entire faith in it."

"The Pomeroys were always given to superstition, more or less," remarked Mr. Hildyard. "But, to let it run the length of seeing a ghost in the west tower! How could fancy so mislead them? It was the wind, I suppose, playing upon the panes."

"Not altogether. Something must have been there, I take it; some person, I mean. A horrible fear, of whom it perhaps was, has lain upon me ever since."

"But who is that?" said Mr. Hildyard, not failing to perceive that Leolin was greatly moved.

"Rupert."

A long, silent pause. Ill though Mr. Hildyard was, the avowal startled him. He was the first to speak, after running over probabilities in his mind.

"I think you must be mistaken. Of all places on the habitable world, he would surely shun Pomeroy. He would never dare to venture there."

"He ventured to England once, you know."

"And that once must have sufficed to show him his folly."

"We cannot know it. Bridget's idea was that he had taken refuge in the west tower as the safest place; the place where he would be the least liable to be looked for. The woman has some shrewd sense. You remember her?"

"Quite well. But, look here: putting aside the extreme unlikelihood that Rupert would be guilty of such imprudence, every probability tells against it. How could he get up to the west wing? You say the keys were safe."

"It is a mystery to me altogether, and a very unpleasant one," said Leolin. "Since that woman Bridget suggested the thought to me,

ten times an hour I say to myself, is it possible: and I see that it may be. Rupert may have ventured a second time to these shores; and, driven to extremity, hunted from lair to lair in his fear of pursuit, may have pitched upon that refuge as being the one almost sure not to be suspected and searched."

"But you have searched—and found no one."

"Yes, but it was at night. And there may be nooks and corners that the light did not penetrate, or we see—any way, the fear that he is hiding there haunts me. Who knows but some secret closet may exist there?"

"How could he be fed?"

"I know not. Unless he has had Cox in his pay. I might suspect old Jerome were he at the abbey; but he is not. Jerome would run his very neck into a noose to serve or save a Pomeroy."

"Has Jerome got him shut up in the keep?" went on Mr. Hildyard. But he made the remark in simple pleasantry, his mind refusing to admit the possibility that Rupert could be at Pomeroy. And this Leolin detected. Rupert was in the west tower, if anywhere; not at the keep.

"And what is it that you wish me to do for you?—or, rather, Prael; for it must be he in future."

"I don't know what it is," confessed Leolin; "I don't know that anything can be done. The fact is, I am too uneasy to be at rest; and I came up to put the case before you and ask your opinion upon it; more especially to ask whether you have gained any clue latterly as to where Rupert is."

"Not the slightest," promptly replied Mr. Hildyard. "We have never heard of him at all since Collins left him on board the Spanish boat. Does the Lady of Pomeroy never hear from him?—her husband, George, used to.

Leolin shook his head. "We are not great friends, she and I, but she would be sure not to keep so grave a thing from me as any communication from Rupert. I would almost give up my birthright to set the question at rest; to be assured of where Rupert is at this present moment," passionately added Leolin.

Mr. Hildyard understood perfectly what he meant by his "birthright:" the heirship of Pomeroy. He was beginning to look upon Leolin, in regard to that point, as partly demented.

"Have you any further news from Rome?" resumed the lawyer, following out his own thoughts.

"None. Rome is given to be dilatory!"

"It always was, and always will be, when the Vatican itself is set against a thing."

"The Vatican is not set against this thing of mine," hotly spoke Leolin. "One or two of its people may use their pertinacious influence against it; nothing more."

"Just so; it comes to the same."

Leolin rose. "I cannot take up your time longer—and to no purpose," he remarked. "I wish you could have advised me — or suggested some little ray of light."

"I think, were I you," slowly spoke Mr. Hildyard, "I should at once throw that west wing open. Open all the rooms, one after another; doors and windows too, and let them stay open day and night."

But there might be objections to this plan; even as the lawyer spoke, they passed through Leolin's mind. If Rupert were indeed there, it might be fatal to him; leading to his discovery: moreover, control in these matters was not vested in Leolin, but in Sybilla. So long as she ostensibly reigned, the Lady of Pomeroy, her will was law when she chose to exert it. And she had all along shown herself resolute in keeping the west wing unmolested.

"I trust I shall soon hear better news of you," said Leolin, some slight tremor in his voice, as he gazed upon that fading face.

"There will be no 'better' for me in this world," was the lawyer's answer; "I feel that I now see you for the last time. Mr. Leolin, we have been good friends for many years, as client and advocate. I have served the Pomeroy family faithfully ——"

"You have, you have," impulsively interrupted Leolin, pressing the hands that clasped his. "Never a more faithful friend than you."

"Then, will you pardon me if I presume upon that long friendship, those years of service, by giving to you a last word of advice? I do it as a dying man. *Prevail upon yourself to let the contest with Rome drop*—or, rather, the contest with the rights of the young child. You know what I have always said—that the cause is not a righteous one. I feel sure, I seem to see clearly, that Heaven does not and will not prosper it. Cease the vexatious strife, and thereby ensure peace to your conscience. You may need the comfort when you come to be as I am. It is for your own sake I advise this."

"I am sure it is, and I thank you," returned Leolin warmly. "I thank you just as much as though I could take the advice. From your point of view it is only kind of you to give it. Oh—by the way—to go to another subject: I hear our people, the Essingtons, are in town."

"For a few days. Lord Essington was here with Prael yesterday."

"Prael did not tell me that this morning. He is rather close, I fancy: we shall not like him as well as we liked you. Cardine is all abroad again, I suppose."

"Abroad in more senses than one this time. He has gone to Germany, out of the way, leaving his father to settle-up for him. Lord Essington has need of patience."

"Ay. Well, good-bye; good-bye, dear Mr. Hildyard. I wish I could hear of your getting better! I wonder what it is that has induced this grave illness?"

The last words were spoken in that light and semi-insincerity which we are all apt to use now and then in social converse, for Leolin

Pomeroy did know what had induced the illness. At least, he guessed —Mr. Hildyard was dying of that not very uncommon malady, a broken heart.

"Now, shall I go to Berkeley Square, or shall I not?" debated Leolin. "If I could make sure Essington was out, I would. I think I'll chance it."

For, Leolin Pomeroy no longer cared to meet his father-in-law too often. For some time now a coolness had existed between them. There had been no quarrel, no bitter words; but the older Lord Essington grew, the more strongly did he disapprove of Leolin's policy, to dispossess the young Lord of Pomeroy: and, as the earl was open-natured and very much given to say what he thought, Leolin kept out of his way.

Fortune favoured him. Lady Essington and Geraldine were at home, but not his lordship. Leolin sat down to lunch with them.

They could converse unrestrainedly at the meal, as it was not customary for servants to be in attendance. Mabel was married; married well; but not to the Duke of St. Ives, who had never come forward again after Anna's rejection.

"And what of your wife?" asked Lady Essington. "Is she really getting strong?"

"I think so; I hope so," replied Leolin. "She had a very slight attack of ague a night or two ago—but something had occurred to put her out."

"What was it that occurred?"

"Oh, nothing particular. A little matter startled her."

"Got frightened about her baby, I expect, poor girl: I'm sure I hope this one will live. It is very sad Anna should have had this nervous fever," added the countess.

"It was not a nervous fever."

"Bordering upon it."

"It was intermittent fever," contended Leolin, incipient resentment in his tone.

"They are much alike. We have spoken of it here as nervous fever all along. Her father thinks it was one."

"But I assure you it was not," persisted Leolin.

"Well, it is his opinion. He says he wonders Anna has not been worried into one before."

Leolin laid down his knife and fork, deeply offended. "*Lord Essington wonders that Anna has not been worried into fever before!* Why, what can you possibly mean by saying that?"

"It is her father who says it: I don't say it. I am sure he has Anna a great deal upon his mind. He thinks that this perpetual scheming, which goes on, tries her and tells upon her."

"Perpetual scheming!"

"With Rome, you know. To dispossess that little Pomeroy and put yourself in his place."

"It is by right my place," said Leolin.

"Of course you think so. I think with you, for that matter. But Anna and her father both look at it in the opposite light, you know: and he feels sure that Anna gets frightened at what the consequences may be; that she never has a truly happy moment. And he says if you don't mind, you'll lose her."

"I am extremely obliged to him," stiffly spoke Leolin. "I hope I can take better care of my wife than that. Perhaps you will tell him so, Lady Essington?"

"Perhaps I won't. Of what use would it be? Talking of trouble, here's Cardine in a fine plight again."

"Cardine is never out of a plight, is he?" returned Leolin, his good-humour not restored.

"When his father gets him out of it; never else. We shall have to sell Hawk's Rest, I expect, this time. And now poor Hildyard must go and break up! As my husband says, it is one trouble upon another."

"I have just come from Hildyard; from Russell Square. How sadly he looks! Dying, it seems to me."

"Ay. He got his death-blow when Lord Winchester ran off with Frances. There's another nice young man for you! Winchester and Cardine might have been running a race together to try which could get the deeper into debt. But I don't think Cardine would turn villain and break an old man's heart. Is Miss Pomeroy at the abbey now?"

"Yes; she came a few days ago. How is that pretty little friend of mine?" added Leolin, turning the conversation from the subject of the abbey—for it was not by any means his intention to disclose aught of the commotion just now agitating it, and he did not wish to be too closely questioned.

"Which little friend?"

"Annaline Hetley."

"Oh, poor little thing, she's at Naples with her father and mother and the rest of them. Frank Hetley has succeeded in getting some small diplomatic post there. By the way, I think you helped him to it. It brings him in a trifle; and he has a trifle of his own, and I have no doubt Lord Essington makes up the rest. I tell my husband the world would not know what to do without him; he goes out of his way to help so many people."

Leolin, cutting himself another slice of partridge pie, privately wondered whether she knew that he was one of the helped; and, if so, to what extent. But no; he thought not. Open though the earl was, he could keep his own counsel.

"And when are you going back to Pomeroy, Leolin?" asked Lady Geraldine, who had in vain tried to get in a word before.

"To-night."

"And came up but yesterday! A short stay. You seem to be always running up and down."

"Yes, a short stay this time. I only wanted to say a word or two to Hildyard. And I am glad I came; for I suppose I shall never see him again."

And so, the lunch concluded, and the day wore on. And by the night train Leolin travelled down to Pomeroy.

He found the place in a worse commotion than when he left it. During each of the two nights of his absence the shade of Guy, Lord of Pomeroy, had again been seen in the west tower. Amidst others, Norris the surgeon, cold, keen, and sceptical upon the subject of ghosts in general, had seen and recognized it.

Leolin knew not what to think, what to be at. Maintaining an outward appearance of cynical calmness, of haughty disbelief, inwardly he was quaking with fear. Not the same fear that agitated his retainers, but that other more tangible fear of its being really Rupert. That some one, or some thing, was positively haunting the west tower, he could not well disbelieve; the testimony to that effect was too unanimous. While telling his dependents that folly was running away with their senses, while visiting on them the severest displeasure that reproofs could convey, his own mind was kept in a state of intolerable torment.

The days passed on. Far from any improvement setting in at Pomeroy, matters became worse. The peace of the abbey was gone. It was only too evident, to all who chose to exercise their sight, that the spirit of the unhappy Lord of Pomeroy did indeed haunt the spot where he had met his terrible death; that he could not rest in his grave. Night after night that figure was seen in the rooms; sometimes close to the window, the moon shining on it; on the dark nights, the watchers would see it surrounded by a light. Restless, ever restless was the spirit. Father Andrew had himself locked the doors, as he assured them with his own lips; but what of that? in every one of the rooms of the west wing would it appear in succession, gliding through them as only spirits can be supposed to glide. Mrs. Pomeroy was wearing to a shadow. Terrified and awe-stricken though she was, she yet could not resist the fascination of the horrible sight, but would sit at her window throughout the early part of the night, watching for it. When it appeared, she would seize hold of Bridget, who was generally her companion, and hide her face on the woman's arm, and sob and shiver in agony. "If this goes on, sir, it will kill her," whispered Bridget one day to Leolin. And he would have been too glad to put an end to it, had he known how.

One evening Leolin took up his station in the haunted room, with Father Andrew and Cox the custodian: Cox being chosen not because he was the head of the retainers, but because he possessed more common sense than the others, and was less affected by fears. Moreover, had Rupert appeared, Cox was to be trusted. Until morning dawn watched they, seeing and hearing nothing. Entirely unmolested by sight or sound they remained.

That was not all. When the sun had risen, glinting the tops of the casements, and threw out the angles and corners of the rooms into broad daylight, they made a thorough search; not a nook escaped them: but no signs could be discovered of any person or thing, supernatural or human; not a trace was there of the appearance so often seen, not the faintest clue as to what it might be. And Leolin and the priest both convinced themselves, minutely examining the aspect and extent of the walls, that no private hiding-place could be concealed within them. Leolin locked up the rooms again, his brain more exercised than ever.

Perhaps the only inhabitant of the abbey who absolutely refused credence to these superstitious fancies, was the Lady of Pomeroy. But, as Joan remarked, Sybilla had always been of strong mind. Her father, John Gaunt, could never be brought to put faith in the supernatural, and Sybilla was like him. The lady, making a half joke of it, recommended her domestics to keep their eyes at night off the west wing and tower, and no doubt the "ghost" would soon go away as he had come.

Easier said than done. Far rather would the servants have gone without their supper, one and all, than kept their eyes from that sight, whose very dread made its fascination. Behind the pillars of the cloisters, at the windows of the upper corridors, in the dark corners of the quadrangle, stood they: and when the apparition showed itself, many a one among them recognized its face, all too unmistakably, to be that of the dead Lord of Pomeroy.

For, in spite of the night's vigil that Leolin, the priest, and Cox had kept; in spite of their earnest testimony, that no one was or could be in the west wing, and therefore that no trick was being played (as had been lately suggested); the shadowy form was seen afterwards just as frequently as before, and trouble and discomfort prevailed.

In the depth of the universal tribulation, a suggestion came from Joan Pomeroy. Poor Joan, more full of anguish perhaps than anyone else, and at the same time more religiously bound to the superstition, had never yet prevailed upon herself to look at the apparition. She sat in a front room in the evening; the curtains of her bedchamber were closely drawn before daylight had departed. But though Joan would not see, she heard all there was to hear; it shook her terribly, and undermined her peace.

From her came first the suggestion that Father Andrew should "lay" the ghost. That could not fail to be efficacious, as faithful Joan believed. The idea was eagerly seized upon by the abbey, and the priest was applied to.

You may have heard the tale of the country clergyman. The farmers in one of the midland counties were in despair at the long-continued drought. Their ground was parched up, their crops were withering; they saw nothing but ruin before them, and all for the want

of rain. They went up in a body to their parson, one Saturday evening, with a petition that he would pray for rain the following day at service. "Oh, I'll pray for rain and welcome," cried the good man; "but be hanged if you'll get any till the moon changes."

Just in that disbelieving spirit, did Father Andrew consent to offer up *his* prayers for the laying of the ghost. At first he positively refused to do anything of the kind. The priest had never given in to the theory: from him had emanated the suggestion that it might be a trick. However, for peace' sake; or, rather, hoping that it might induce peace, he consented.

"I'll do it," he said, "as you are all so urgent; but I protest against it. There's no ghost to lay, and never has been any."

Fifty tales, testifying to the presence of the ghost, were offered the father in refutation of this opinion of his; but they made no manner of impression on him. One slight stumbling-block in his mind may have lain in the fact that he did not know how it was to be done. Never having been asked to lay a ghost before, he was to be excused if he felt a little uncertain in what manner to set about it.

At the appointed hour the west wing was thrown open, and the priest, arrayed in his sacred vestments, went in. He sprinkled the rooms with holy water as he passed through them, and in that of the west tower, the haunted room, he read a prayer for the repose of the spirit of Guy Pomeroy. No irreverence could lie in that, whether the spirit did wander or whether it did not.

Alas, nothing came of it. What *can* come of supplications offered up without heartfelt faith? And in spite of the prayer and the holy water, the apparition wandered more than ever.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON THE SEAT BY THE SEA.

It was the first Sunday in November; and the day, a bright one, was fading into night. All Saints' Day and the day following it, All Souls' Day—or, as the French more expressively term it, the Day of the Dead—had been duly observed at Pomeroy, the one with grandeur, the other with appropriate gloom, according to Pomeroy usage. The weather since the middle of October had been beautiful: let it continue so another week, and they would this year have a true été de St. Martin.

Standing talking together at the door of the lodge, in the gathering twilight, were Charles Knox of the Knoll and James Knox, the agent. Mr. Knox chose to take a friendly notice of his poorer kinsman once in a way; and he had walked over to see him this afternoon; had taken some tea with him, and was now preparing to say good-night. But their discourse had turned upon old family reminiscences; and Charles Knox lingered yet.

It might be said that the night had fairly set in when he shook hands and finally took his departure. He was a little man of impetuous movements and temper, good-hearted and honest; his face a chronic redness, his nose sharp. Mrs. Pomeroy's imperious rejection of him had not lain on his heart; since then he had wooed and won a charming girl, who had now just presented him with a son and heir.

Considering that there was no moon, the night was singularly light. Charles Knox noted the fact as he strolled leisurely up through the village. A white haze pervaded the atmosphere and lighted up the sea: he could see the water as plainly as though it were but twilight. He was in no particular hurry to get home, and looked leisurely about him.

Leaving Pomeroy abbey to the left, he continued the gentle ascent of the high road; which in twenty minutes, or so, would take him to his own gates. If he chose to strike off to the left beyond the abbey gardens, and pursue the field way, he would shorten his route by some five minutes. Mr. Knox was deliberating with himself in an indifferent kind of way whether he should do this, when a blue flame, suddenly flaring up from a ship out at sea, cut his thoughts short.

"What does the vessel want?" he exclaimed to himself, standing still to gaze. "Or are the sailors simply amusing themselves?"

Turning off the road, he descended some steps cut in the rock, not very high there, and gained the beach below. This strip of beach, but a few yards in length, belonged exclusively to the Pomeroys and was called the abbey beach; other people did not intrude upon it. There the young Pomeroys used to moor their pleasure-boats; from thence, when lads, they would jump into the sea and bathe. The rocks jutted out in a point at each end, and partially enclosed it: the end nearest the village a natural seat in the rocks was formed. Mr. Knox remembered this seat, and went towards it, intending to take up his station there for a short while and watch. If the ship was in distress, he might be able to give the alarm.

But, when half way to the seat, he suddenly halted. It was occupied. Some man sat there. A man who, disturbed no doubt by his footsteps, turned his head and face sharply round to scan the intruder. And when the eyes of Knox of the Knoll rested on that face, his heart gave a wild leap within him.

"It is Rupert Pomeroy!" gasped he.

Drawing up a short dark cloak, that seemed to have fallen from his shoulders as he sat, drawing down his cap until it concealed his face as well as his head, the poor exile and wanderer leaped up the rocks behind him: a short but dangerous ascent.

"Rupert! Rupert!" cried Charles Knox in a loud whisper. "Wait. I am your friend—Knox of the Knoll. I'll do what I can for you."

But the only answer was the continuous ascent of Rupert, and

the muffled sound of a human voice, that seemed to come from the air above. "Back, Knox; back."

Mr. Knox had not scaled those rocks since he was a boy. He did not care to try the feat now, for he knew how easy it would be to slip backwards: he ran to the steps and hastened up them. The tall, thin, cloaked figure was striding across the road and the greensward beyond it, making for the abbey gardens. Charles Knox strode after him.

But to no purpose. A small door stood here in the midst of the wall. The fugitive gained it, opened it, and disappeared within the gardens. Mr. Knox ran up at the best speed of his little legs, to find the door locked against him.

"What a dreadful thing," he exclaimed: meaning of course that Rupert should be at Pomeroy. "What frightful hazard!"

Standing like one bewildered, he had still his hand on the door when somebody else came in view. Norris the surgeon: who had, in fact, been to the Knoll to pay his evening visit to Mrs. Knox. The doctor recognised him and left the road to cross the greensward. Mr. Knox crossed it also, and met him half way.

"I was never so startled in all my life," cried Knox; and, in the mental confusion and perplexity of the moment he disclosed to the doctor what had just happened. Mr. Norris, an equable man at all times and seasons, took the news calmly.

"I suspected Rupert must be here," was his reply. "Two or three people declare that they have seen him."

"But what culpable imprudence!" exclaimed Mr. Knox. "I think I had better tell Leolin Pomeroy."

He walked back by the doctor's side to the abbey. They both entered it together. The one to pay a professional visit to Lady Anna; the other to seek an interview with her husband.

Leolin was sitting at the open window, without lights, when Mr. Knox was shown in. He had seen the blue light thrown up from the ship, and was watching. Charles Knox sat down, and in a low covert tone, imparted to Leolin what had taken place.

Every pulse within him coursing on to fever heat, every wild apprehension that imagination could suggest rising up in his heart, Leolin, in his fear and distress, yet made a feint of doubting the words. "It could not be," he said: "your eyesight must have deceived you."

"Could not be!" retorted peppery Mr. Knox. "Do you think I have forgotten your brother? I say that it was Rupert; Rupert himself: and I am come here to tell it you."

Not for long did Leolin hold out. His heart was sinking with despair. Clasping the friendly hands that were so willing to meet his, he confessed that the very thing he had been dreading for two or three weeks past was this: that Rupert was lying concealed at Pomeroy.

"We must find him—and get him away from it," cried Charles Knox. "I'll stand by you; I'll do what I can for him. People

would say it is compounding a—a felony, I expect; but I'd risk that for Rupert. He was a good friend of mine once, poor fellow. I always liked him. Who could help liking him? Ah, never shall I forget that last dinner he had with me—or part of a dinner. My aunt, Lady Millichip, was staying at the Knoll—you know her; silly old coquette;—going on and flirting, as she did, with Rupert at the table! When he got up in the middle of dinner, saying he was obliged to leave for a short while but would come back again and finish the evening, she turned crusty. An hour or two later we heard the dreadful news: that a quarrel had taken place between him and his brother and that Guy was dead."

"It was not with you he took refuge at that time, was it?" exclaimed Leolin, the thought suggesting itself.

"Certainly not. He never came to the Knoll again. It would not have been safe if he had come. No: from the time he left my dinner-table that night, I never saw him until now."

"Through the door into the garden?" mused Leolin. "But the gardeners keep that door locked."

"He must have a key that opens it."

"And what can he want in the gardens—and where can he be hiding?"

"Had we not better go there?" suggested Charles Knox.

Down stairs at once went they, passed along the cloisters, and thence to the gardens by the proper entrance. The ship and her blue lights were forgotten now. Hither and thither through the grounds they stole. Once or twice, Leolin called out his brother's name in a semi-whisper—"Rupert! Rupert!"

All in vain. The gardens were, or appeared to be, entirely deserted. Of course there was every opportunity for Rupert, if indeed he was still in them, to escape detection; to make his silent way to one part while they were searching another. The small door opposite the sea was locked: no sign existed of anyone's having passed its portals. And at last, when something like an hour and a half had elapsed, they had to give up the quest as a fruitless one.

"Whatever happens, rely upon me," said Charles Knox, pressing Leolin's hand in parting.

He hastened home to his wife—who probably was wondering whether he had run away from her. And Leolin sat on at the open window again, gazing at the sea, too uneasy to go to bed, too sick at heart to remember how the night was passing. With Guy hovering about in the spirit and Rupert in the body, Leolin knew not what to be at, what quarter to turn to for comfort.

Monday dawned. A sunny morning. In front of the abbey gateway, Miss Mary Pomeroy's pony, saddled and bridled, was being led about; Jeffs, already mounted, waited in the rear. The usual attendant on Miss Mary during her rides was an elderly man named Lamp, who had been one of the grooms in the old lord's

time. The supernatural atmosphere just now pervading the abbey had so upset Lamp as to make him ill: at least, he put it upon that score, and had obtained leave of absence. So Jeffs had been borrowed, as the young lady once expressed it, for temporary attendance on her.

For once Mrs. Pomeroy had taken advice. Herself impressed with the conviction that the abbey in its present state of excitement was not a desirable residence for her little daughter, she had lost no time in placing Mary at the convent. In spite of the child's opposition, Mrs. Pomeroy carried her point: and it was just a fortnight ago to-day that Mary entered. But some concession had to be made: without it, perhaps the fate of the battle would have been doubtful, for Mrs. Pomeroy had to do with a will stronger by nature than her own. She promised the child that she should always come home from Saturday to Monday; that is, Mary was to be what is called a weekly boarder. To this Mary yielded, and went with a tolerably good grace.

On the previous Monday morning, a week ago, she had made no objection to going back. On this morning they were waiting for her to come out, a groom holding the pony, Jeffs ready to escort her.

Presently the young lady appeared in an ordinary walking dress and straw hat; a grey skirt being fastened on for riding. Rupert Pomeroy was with her—looking very tall for his eleven years, slender, gentlemanly, beautiful of face as ever—and Mademoiselle de Garonne. Mademoiselle retained her post at the abbey, and looked after Mary during her weekly sojourn in it. Bridget, and others of the servants, came running out to see the child away: they were all very fond of her, though she did tyrannize over them.

Rupert put her on her pony. When seated, she remained still, talking with one and another.

"And mind, Miss Mary," cried Bridget, "that you bring home next Saturday the beautiful strip of embroidery you have begun. We want to see it."

"I don't know that I shall. When a good piece of it is finished then I may. There is only a flower and a scallop done yet. And they are going to pick that out, because it's done badly. Sister Agnes said that."

"My dear," interposed mademoiselle, "shall you not be late?"

"No doubt I shall be. Jeffs," coolly added the young lady, turning her head to the old man, "I am not going back to the convent this morning. I shall take a ride instead."

Mademoiselle de Garonne, Bridget, the maids, old Jeffs himself, all lifted their hands and voices in reproof of the heresy. Mrs. Pomeroy, standing at an open upper window to see Mary start, heard, and came down.

"You will go straight to the convent, Mary, turning neither to the right nor the left. Jeffs, do you hear? Miss Mary must go straight back."

"It is not as Jeffs pleases, mamma; it is as I please."

"It is as *I* please," corrected Mrs. Pomeroy. "You are late now. It will be ten o'clock before you get there."

"It is a beautiful morning; I should like a ride and I shall take it, mamma. I mean to pay a visit to grandmamma, and to Naomi Rex. If I feel inclined, I shall ride about all day, and get to the convent at bed time."

With perfect calmness, but with the utmost depth of displayed *will*, the young lady asserted this. Mrs. Pomeroy broke out into scolding, her voice raised higher than it need have been. In the midst of it Leolin appeared.

"What is the disturbance?" he asked. "Is anything amiss, Mrs. Pomeroy? Won't go back to school properly! I am surprised at you, Mary."

"I shall go back when I please, Uncle Leolin. And if it were not that I like being with the little girls there, I should not go back at all. Papa did what pleased him always, and I shall do what pleases me."

"And were I your papa, my little lady, I should carry you back to the convent myself, and not let you see the outside of it for six months."

"But you are not my papa; you are only my Uncle Leolin," retorted Mary, keeping herself and her temper perfectly cool.

"Mary, I insist upon your riding off at once," interposed her mother. "There. Good-bye. Be a good child, and present my regards to the ladies."

Apparently, Mary prepared to obey, for she urged the pony a few steps forward. Then she halted again, opposite the young lord.

"I shall not say good-bye to you, Rupert: and I don't know that I shall speak to you when I next come home. You are very wicked this morning. You might have come with me if you would. Good-bye, mamma. Good-bye, all. I am off now, Jeffs. To grandmamma's first."

Self-will! Treason! Surely enough, the young lady, riding off at a canter, deliberately took the road to Mrs. Wylde's, not so much as looking at that which led to the convent.

"Rupert, run!" gasped Mrs. Pomeroy in a half angry, half despairing accent, for how to manage this wilful child, she knew not. "Run round to the stables, get on your pony as quickly as you can, and ride after her. You are the only one in this world who has influence over her will, who can persuade her. Show her that she *must* go back to the convent at once. Make haste! What will the ladies think!"

Away flew Rupert. He desired nothing better than to ride with Mary this sunny morning. Her reproach to him had been caused by his having refused to go with her in disobedience. "You get your pony, Rupert, and we'll take a good long ride together; never mind your tutor or your mother or mamma," she had said. And

when Rupert, who had none of her daring defiance to authorities and rules, replied that he would not go clandestinely, she had reviled him in her childish way.

Three minutes, and Rupert was galloping after her. They saw him join her: they saw him put his hand on Mary's bridle rein, and talk to her in his earnest way. He did not quite prevail: but the young rebel consented to a compromise. She paid the visit to her grandmamma at the White House, and then returned to the convent.

The group round the abbey gates, after watching as much of this as they could see, went indoors, Leolin alone remaining. His time seemed to hang on hand, his days passed listlessly. Leolin had no heart for anything. Shooting, boating, other sports—all had lost their zest.

Take, for instance, this morning. There he stood, the sun shining on his good-looking face, utterly at a loss what to do with himself. Should he ride out on horseback as the children had just done; should he stroll through the village; should he go off yonder and sit on the rocks and gaze at the monotonous sea, as his unwelcome brother Rupert had sat the previous night, and strive for the five-hundredth time to think out his perplexities? Should he take his gun, and ——

"Good morning, Mr. Pomeroy."

"Ah, good morning," answered Leolin, wheeling round to see James Knox, the agent; who was coming up to his daily business. "A fine day."

"Very," said James Knox.

Purely from the lack of something to do, Leolin turned and walked by his side to the business chamber. James Knox, who was very busy just then with the Michaelmas rents, privately wished Leolin and his desultory chat elsewhere. Something was said about the flourishing state of the revenues, and the increased income that must accrue to the Lady of Pomeroy; it put Leolin in mind of Major Barkley, and he mentioned his name.

"I was talking to him on Saturday," carelessly replied the agent: and Leolin caught up the words with a start.

"Talking to him on Saturday! To Barkley? Where is he, then?"

"He is staying at Owlstone; but I fancy he is coming here on a visit to the lady. He was here on Saturday. She brought him into this room and introduced me to him."

"Seems to make himself at home!" exclaimed Leolin, his ire excited at the bare mention of the man: and he remembered that on Saturday he had, for a wonder, taken a whole day's shooting, thereby escaping the sight of Major Barkley and the knowledge of his visit.

"Quite so," observed Knox, innocently acquiescing in the remark. "He went to see old Jerome during the afternoon."

"What did he want with Jerome?" cried Leolin, haughtily.

"Nothing particular, I suppose. I saw him coming out of the keep."

Whether rightly or wrongly, as circumstances might hereafter decide, Leolin was cherishing a strong prejudice against this Major Barkley. If it pleased Sybilla to have him at the abbey and make much of him, no one had the power to say her nay; but what right had the fellow to intrude himself into the keep? Jerome was the servant of the Pomeroys—he had never been Sybilla's. No underhand work should go on if he, Leolin, could prevent it.

Quitting the room at once, Leolin stalked round to the keep, and rang a peal on the bell that might have startled old Jerome if he heard it. It was to be inferred that he did not hear it, as it remained unanswered. Leolin rang on.

"He *must* be out, I suppose! Where can he have gone to at this early hour?"

As the words left Leolin's lips and he was about to give it up, the door was slowly drawn open by Jerome. Scared and pale, the old man stood there staring, very much as though Leolin had been the ghost come round from the haunted room.

"What do you mean, Jerome, by keeping me ringing like this? Are you deaf, that you could not hear it?"

"I was upstairs, sir," was Jerome's tremulous answer, his shaking hands drawing forth a chair for his master. "I hope you'll please to pardon me, Mr. Leolin. I had gone up to look for a last winter's coat that I can't put my hands on; and I thought nothing more but that it was the baker's boy with my loaf."

"Did you have a visit from a Major Barkley on Saturday?" began Leolin.

"Oh, sir! Why do you ask that?"

"*Why do I ask that?*" retorted Leolin; suspicions, he knew not of what, cropping up in his mind. "I have a right to ask it; and to have it answered. What did Major Barkley want with you?"

"He wanted nothing with me, sir; nothing that could anger you. The gentleman was good enough to call and ask how I was, just as he did the other times he has stayed here. He heard of old Jerome from Mr. George, sir, and he, being a kindly gentleman, came to tell me so; and he has slipped a crown piece into my hand each time."

Leolin knitted his brow: had he been making a mountain of a molehill? The old man was shaking and shivering.

"What are you trembling at, Jerome?"

"Trembling, sir? I'm old now, Mr. Leolin, and these stories that are being told about the abbey, and what's seen there, upset me. Never a ring sharper than ordinary comes to the door, but it puts me in a twitter."

"You have not got my brother concealed here in the keep, have

you?" cried Leolin, after a pause. And Jerome stared at the questioner like a demented man, never answering.

"I speak of poor Rupert," explained Leolin. "Is he here?"

"The good Lord forbid!" ejaculated Jerome, crossing himself: and his terrified dismay at the bare idea was too genuine not to assure Leolin, had he needed assurance, that wheresoever Rupert might be sheltering himself, it was not at the keep. Though indeed he had but spoken idly, the remark of Mr. Hildyard chancing to occur to him.

"Look here, Jerome—you are a faithful adherent of the Pomeroys, and I will mention to you a fear which has been haunting me. This apparition—that the servants talk of; that is scaring their wits away—I hold a theory that it may be Rupert."

Jerome, trembling still, looked all at sea. He evidently failed to comprehend.

"What I think, what I have reason to fear is, that Rupert has found his way back here in secret: that it is he himself they are taking for a ghost in the west tower."

"Mercy be good to us!" uttered Jerome. "Mr. Rupert's ghost, sir?"

"His ghost, no! Himself. He is not dead. Driven to bay, he may have sought shelter in the west tower."

"Ah, no, Mr. Leolin," said the old man mournfully, fully understanding now. "It is not, it cannot be Mr. Rupert. It is the Lord of Pomeroy, sir: he has never been able to lie quiet in his grave. And, sir, I think it's nothing short of presumptuous heresy for the servants, and others, to go ferreting into that west tower. Better let it be. Spirits that come again should not be tampered with."

To argue on the subject of supernatural appearances with Jerome would have been a hopeless task; and Leolin took his departure.

A little more time passed on, uncomfortably. Guy Pomeroy was seen now and again; rumours arose that Rupert was. The abbey might be said to exist in a state of perpetual shiver; even Leolin, though he ridiculed the superstitious fears with his lips, hardly knew whether he was not becoming a half convert to them in his heart. Continual dropping, we are told, will wear away a stone.

Major Barkley still made Owlstone his head-quarters, though why he should do so Leolin could not conceive. Unless it was to enjoy the society of the Lady of Pomeroy, for he made occasional trips over, staying at the abbey for two or three days together. Leolin avoided him as much as he decently could, and yet keep up some show of civility, urging his wife's delicate health as the plea for refusing most of Sybilla's invitations to join them at dinner. Joan was sometimes at home, sometimes at the convent. The abbey tried her nerves, and she was often glad to run away from it.

Matters were in this state when a terrible incident occurred. One afternoon Joan and Leolin went to call upon some friends who lived near, and sat with them until dark. Dark, however, it was not; for

the moon, once more high in the sky, occasionally gave her light; now hiding herself under a cloud, now shining out, clear and brilliant. Their nearest way back lay across the fields, past the chapel. Under the yew hedge that skirted the small graveyard they met Father Andrew. He was going home, but turned to walk with them.

"I have just been with Mrs. Pomeroy," the priest observed. "My opinion is, that if we cannot get this wretched belief in the apparition out of her mind, it will kill her. She protests to me that she saw it plainer last night than she has done at all, except the first time in the haunted chamber."

"She told me of it this morning," sighed Joan. "She says that strange, pale light, they talk of, was shining round it, and stood at the window for two or three minutes, when it seemed to sink through the floor."

"It is so truly absurd!" exclaimed Father Andrew, more irascibly than the good-natured priest often spoke. "Mrs. Pomeroy has a ghost mania upon her; it will go on to insanity, if she does not take care."

"It is no mania, father," said Joan.

The priest took her quickly up. "Have you seen it?"

"No. I have kept myself from the sight. I trust I never shall see it."

"Neither has anybody seen it, save Mrs. Pomeroy and the servants. We all know what to understand when servants profess such belief: and Mrs. Pomeroy, as I say, has a mania upon her."

"You forget Lady Anna—and Norris," interposed Leolin. He was in a fractious mood, no extraordinary case lately; to contradict even the father seemed a relief.

"Their eyes must have deceived them; I insist upon it that they must. And as to your family—why you know how superstitious you have all been from your cradles."

"Some of us, you should say."

"You have all a taint of it, every one. It would not surprise me any morning to find you come to me with a tale that you had seen it."

"Possibly the day may dawn, father, when you will see it and believe in it," returned Joan.

The father took a solacing pinch of snuff. "When I do see it, I'll believe in it," quoth he; "not before."

"We shall never agree upon this subject, father."

"Never, my daughter. So we will drop it, and I'll say good evening."

"You may as well come on and dine with me," said Leolin to him.

"Thank you; I don't care if I do," replied the ever-sociable priest, who liked only one thing better than a good chat, and that was a good dinner. "I should find but a poor supper at home, I expect—bread and cheese. This is cleaning day; and Marget says cooking interferes with cleaning."

"I should not put up with Marget's whims," said Leolin.

"I sometimes tell her I won't. But she's too old to be sent adrift, poor creature. Don't believe she's far short of eighty."

A temporary silence ensued. In passing the keep, the moon, sailing majestically from behind a cloud, threw her light upon them; and upon—what?

Right in front of them, of the path they must walk over, stood the spirit of Guy, Lord of Pomeroy. As if to confute the ridiculing disbelief of the priest, there it was, as ghostly, as high, as shadowy as it had ever appeared, its dull eyes fixed upon them in reproach, and its hare-lip conspicuous on its livid face.

The priest, a little in advance, stepped back, crossed his forehead, his breast, crossed himself, in short, all over, and began mechanically a paternoster; Joan, with a suppressed wail of terror and pain, turned and clung to Leolin. The next moment, when they looked up, it had vanished. Vanished whither? In truth they knew not. The thick stone walls of the keep, the mother earth: which—what had received it?

"Father Andrew!" uttered Leolin, surprised for the moment into solemnity, "did you see it?"

"Oh, mercy be good to us, yes!" confessed the priest, wiping his face. "That was Guy Pomeroy. No mistake about it."

"Can the poor spirit have been wandering all these nine years without cessation?" bewailed Joan, in her agony of distress. "Oh, Father Andrew! if it could but be laid to rest!"

(To be continued.)

A FEW FAMOUS DUELS.

REFORM has no more powerful ally than ridicule. We see a noteworthy example of this in the disuse of duelling. The imperious commands of kings and parliament, the sternest penal codes, involving degrading death to the offender, have been directed, in vain, against the practice. But what these were powerless to do, ridicule has done.

The really fatal blow was given to duelling among ourselves, when, in 1838, the town was aroused by the news that an adventurous linen-draper, named Mirvin, had met his death in a duel on Wimbledon Common. The aristocracy had regarded duelling as a pastime to be indulged in by themselves alone—as a last relic, in fact, of the old feudal times; and when they saw their privileges thus invaded, they surrendered them in disgust, and henceforth duelling became unfashionable. It had flourished vigorously while it was merely unlawful, but when it became unfashionable, its days were numbered; and it was abandoned when it became evident that a nobleman might, if he objected to the cut of his coat, find himself forced to accept a challenge from his own tailor. In France duelling is not yet completely defunct, and from time to time we read accounts of the meetings of hot-headed journalists, who aspire to be masters of the sword as well as of the pen. But in France duelling is surely on the wane, and the present generation will probably witness its entire disuse.

France has been prolific in great duellists. Bussy d'Amboise, who lived in the French King Henry III.'s reign, killed almost as many men in duels, as Hector killed Achaians at the siege of Troy, and was himself, with a measure of retributive justice, killed by the Count of Mousoreau, who was jealous of Bussy's attentions to his wife. A duellist belonging to the same period as Bussy d'Amboise, but a very different stamp of man, was the Chevalier Bayard, the knight "sans peur et sans réproche." But we are, perhaps, somewhat arbitrary in styling him a duellist, for a distinction may fairly be drawn between a duel and a single combat. The spectacle of two soldiers, the chosen champions of their countrymen, stepping forth to do battle, while contending armies pause in their strife to gaze with interest on the result, has in it something essentially different from, and essentially more noble than, the secret meeting of two foolish men to settle, by an appeal to arms, some wretched wine-provoked quarrel, having its ignoble origin in cards, dice, or a worthless woman.

The single combat between the Chevalier Bayard and the Spanish champion, Don Alonso de Sotomayor, took place under the walls of the town of Trani, during the war between France and Spain at the commencement of the 16th century. Sotomayor had accused

Bayard of uncourteous treatment of him while his prisoner. Bayard defied the Spaniard to prove the charge in single fight, on horse or on foot as he best liked, and Sotomayor, knowing that the chevalier was the most expert horseman of his age, chose to fight on foot. At the day and hour appointed, February 2, 1503, the two knights entered the lists, armed with sword and dagger, and sheathed in complete harness; although with a degree of temerity unusual in these combats, they wore their visors up. Both combatants knelt down in silent prayer for a few moments, and then rising and crossing themselves, advanced straight against each other; "the good knight Bayard," says Brantôme, "moving as light of step as if he were going to lead some fair lady down the dance."

The Spaniard was of a large and powerful frame, and endeavoured to crush his enemy by weight of blows, or to close with him and bring him to the ground. The latter, naturally inferior in strength, was rendered still weaker by a fever, from which he had not entirely recovered. He was more light and agile than his adversary, however; and superior dexterity enabled him not only to parry his enemy's strokes, but to deal him occasionally one of his own, while he sorely distressed him by the rapidity of his movements. At length, as the Spaniard was somewhat thrown off his balance by an ill-directed blow, Bayard struck him so sharply on the gorget, that it gave way, and the sword entered his throat. Furious with the agony of the wound, Sotomayor collected all his strength for a last struggle, and, grasping his antagonist in his arms, they both rolled in the dust together. Before either could extricate himself, the quick-eyed Bayard, who had retained his poniard in his left hand during the whole combat, while the Spaniard's had remained in his belt, drove the steel with such strength under his enemy's eye that it pierced the brain. After the judges had awarded the honours of the day to Bayard, the minstrels, as usual, began to pour forth strains in praise of the victor; but the good knight commanded them to desist, and, having first prostrated himself on his knees in gratitude for his victory, walked slowly out of the lists, expressing a wish that the combat had had a different termination, so that his honour had been saved.

These single combats were very frequent during this war, and on one occasion, indeed, a meeting took place between eleven Spaniards and an equal number of French knights, which was fought out, according to the laws of chivalry, from early in the morning until sunset. Long before that time the Spaniards had slain or disabled all the Frenchmen save two, of whom the Chevalier Bayard was one. These two heroes, entrenching themselves behind the dead bodies of the horses, held out against all the efforts of the Spaniards, of whom seven were still on horseback; and, as both sides retained possession of the field at sunset, the victory was adjudged to neither.

The duels of olden time were in their results very unlike the French duel of to-day. For there is a ghastly and true story of two

noblemen of Paris, who quarrelled, and determined to settle their differences without any of the customary formalities. Accordingly, they entered a coach, one of the slow, lumbering old vehicles of the time, and directed the coachman to drive slowly twice round the Place Royale. He did so, and then alighted from his box to take the further commands of his master. But that master was never to issue another order. He lay in the coach—dead—at once a murderer and a victim, for beneath him was the corpse of his old friend, his new enemy, pierced with innumerable wounds.

A duel equally sanguinary in its results took place in our own country, in the reign of James I., between two noblemen; the cause being the almost invariable one—"a fair ladye." The duke was the challenger, and, contrary to the laws of duelling, allowed the lord his choice of weapons. They met in Hyde Park, on a cold, wet, miserable morning, and, as was usual in those days, commenced with pistols. They fired two shots apiece with but trifling results; the seconds, even at this early stage, being unceasing in their endeavours to effect a reconciliation. The combatants then seized their swords and rushed upon each other. The impetuosity of the duke's assault had well-nigh cost the lord his life, as, in receiving it, he slipped on the wet grass and stumbled on to his knee, narrowly escaping a thrust through the heart. Again the seconds interpose, but without result; and with redoubled fury, the combat is renewed. At last they arrive at a dead lock: their arms are round each other's body, their swords are firmly interlaced, and their glaring, stern-set faces are almost touching each other. To and fro their bodies sway, each knowing that the one who gets clear first has the other at his mercy, till, by one simultaneous wrench they spring apart, and their swords both whirl into the air, and fall far from them. Nothing now is further from the thoughts of either of them than to resign the contest. They rush eagerly for their swords, and again fall to. Soon the lord is run through the sword-arm, and the duke, in making the thrust, slips a little and falls forward. Quick as lightning the wounded man shifts his sword from right hand to left, and runs it through the duke's body. But in so doing he leaves his whole body unguarded. He cannot withdraw his sword, and the duke, with the weapon still in his body, makes desperate lunges at him. For some time he wards off the thrusts with his hands, but the duke, closing, runs him through just below the heart. In falling forward he drew his sword out of the duke's body, and stumbling across the blade, snapped it short at the hilt. The duke, seeing this, broke his sword purposely across his knee, and, staggering wildly with outstretched hands, fell upon the dead body of his rival: then, with one despairing groan, turned his face heavenward and died.

Although the number of duels which have ended fatally for both the combatants is happily limited, the fashion which prevailed during the eighteenth century of having a number of seconds on either side,

pitted one against the other, caused many duels to end fatally for more than one of the actors in them. One of the most famous duels of this kind, as well as one of the most disastrous in its consequences, was that between the Duke of Hamilton and Lord Mohun, which took place in the reign of Queen Anne, in the year 1712. The Duke of Hamilton was a most amiable and accomplished gentleman, beloved by his friends, and respected by all; while Lord Mohun was the most finished scoundrel and desperado of the time, which is saying a good deal. Lord Mohun, for private reasons, of which revenge was only one, was determined to force a quarrel on the duke. Accordingly, he insulted him grossly and then sent him a challenge, which the duke, although he knew that in so doing he played into the scoundrel's hands, was forced to accept. They met in Hyde Park, and fought long and fiercely. Both were accomplished swordsmen, and, although they wounded each other again and again, no attempt even at a reconciliation was made. It was thoroughly understood that the duel was to the death. The duke had received four serious wounds, and Lord Mohun three, when the duke managed to get past his adversary's guard, and rid the world of one of the most worthless men who have ever disgraced it. What really followed will never be known for certain. As the duke leant forward with his sword still in Lord Mohun's body, he was stabbed through the shoulder to the heart. It was said that Lord Mohun after receiving his death-blow shortened his sword, and, with the desperate strength of a dying man, drove it to the hilt through the duke's body. But this was disbelieved at the time, and Major Macartney, one of Lord Mohun's seconds, was accused of having stabbed the duke from behind, as soon as he saw Lord Mohun was mortally wounded. His immediate flight after the duel lends some colour to the accusation, but that may perhaps be explained by the fact that he well knew no one concerned in the death of such a notable man as the Duke of Hamilton would escape punishment. Be this as it may, the fact remains that one of the most accomplished statesmen and polished gentlemen of the day bartered his life for that of a scoundrel fit only for the hulks. And this shows one great reason why duelling is such miserable folly. Unless the lives involved be equal in value, the game is manifestly unfair. Who, for instance, would contend that the odds were equal in this respect in the following case?

A young Englishman, hardly more than a boy, was wantonly insulted by a Frenchman, one of those Frenchmen of evil notoriety who at one time made a profession of duelling, and a meeting was arranged. Pistols were the weapons chosen, and the "barrier duel" wsa selected as the mode in which they were to fight. In the barrier duel the combatants are placed a certain distance apart, and midway between them a line is drawn. At a given signal they commence to walk towards each other, and either may fire at any moment

he chooses before reaching the line. In this case the English lad fired first, and, his young hand trembling, perhaps as much from fear of killing as of being killed, he missed. The Frenchman continued to walk towards the line in the centre, as did his opponent, and when they stood hardly more than a yard apart the duellist looked full into the fresh young face of the lad, and said slowly, "Have you a mother?" "Yes," was the reply. "Then I am sorry for her;" and with that the cowardly ruffian raised his pistol and blew out the poor boy's brains.

A duel almost as celebrated as that between the Lords Hamilton and Mohun was the one in which Lord Byron, ancestor of the poet, killed Mr. Chaworth. They had some trifling dispute, such as would not now be deemed worthy of a moment's notice; but in those days such trifles often meant death to one or other of the disputants. They fought in a room without seconds or witnesses, and as Mr. Chaworth turned from shutting the door, he saw Lord Byron coming on him, naked sword in hand. As poor Mr. Chaworth significantly said, "I knew him;" and he in turn drew, but too late. Lord Byron shortened his sword and ran him through, inflicting a mortal wound; in fact, there was barely time to take his dying depositions. Lord Byron was tried by his peers, and convicted of manslaughter; but, by pleading his privilege as a peer, he escaped scot free. Mr. Chaworth showed plainly that he had been taken at a disadvantage in a partially darkened room, and there is no doubt that, even in those days, the deed was looked upon as little, if anything, short of murder.

Holland House, so rich in historical associations of every kind, has also been the scene of a fatal duel. In the meadows to the west of the house a meeting took place on the 7th March, 1804, between Lord Camelford and Captain Best, of the Royal Navy. The quarrel had arisen at the opera, where Captain Best had spoken slightingly of a lady whom Lord Camelford loved, "not wisely, but too well." Lord Camelford replied by a challenge, which he was too proud to withdraw, even when, through the efforts of mutual friends, a reconciliation was made possible. His determination to fight was strengthened by the fact that Captain Best had the ghastly renown of being the best shot in England, and Lord Camelford feared that if he withdrew, his honour would be tarnished by the bare fact of his having made any concession to a man with such a reputation. They had been, up to the time of the quarrel, intimate friends, and the horse upon which Captain Best rode to the scene of the encounter had been won from his lordship at a friendly pistol match. The weapons chosen were, as a matter of course, pistols, and Lord Camelford, firing first, missed. Not so his adversary, however. He justified his proud distinction as the most skilful professional murderer of his day by lodging a bullet in Lord Camelford's chest, which penetrated to the lungs and proved fatal. The unhappy man lingered for three days, and expired on the 10th March at Little Holland House, whither he

had been carried from the scene of the duel. The dying nobleman fully forgave his remorseful antagonist, and made a strong and earnest appeal that no legal proceedings should be taken against him. In accordance with this desire, but with, it must be said, an unaccountable laxity on the part of those in authority, the verdict of the coroner's jury was, "Wilful murder against a person or persons *unknown*." A sorry farce, truly, and one which proves to what an extent duelling was a recognized institution less than a hundred years ago. Thackeray, with one of his master-touches, shows us this when he makes Captain Crawley describe his pistols as, "same which I shot Captain Marker with." Lord Camelford's remains were conveyed to Switzerland, and buried in a spot particularly described by him in a codicil to his will, written the day before his death. Lord Holland caused an antique Roman altar to be erected on the spot where he fell, with an appropriate Latin inscription on the pedestal.

One of the most dramatic duels we have read of was that between Mr. Cuddie, a Scotch surgeon, and Mr. Brittlebank. Mr. Cuddie loved, and was beloved by, Miss Brittlebank; a state of affairs which did not please her brothers. Accordingly they sent Mr. Cuddie a challenge, which he refused, sending back the simple and manly answer that he loved Miss Brittlebank, and would not fight with her brother. The brothers then called upon him, accompanied by a friend, and taking pistols with them. They absolutely forced the unfortunate man to fight, heaping insults upon him which no one could stand. The duel, or, we may rather say, the deliberately planned murder, took place in Cuddie's own garden. He fell, shot to the death at the first fire, and his murderer absconded. The other brother and his friend were tried as accessories to the murder. They were acquitted, although the evidence against them was conclusive enough, as their unhappy victim could never be induced to say it had been a fair fight, but died maintaining to the last that he had been foully murdered. What became of the wretched sister, sacrificed to her brothers' pride and cruelty, we know not.

We have not space to give examples of the many political and historical duels which have taken place, nor can we look at duelling from the comic aspect which it undoubtedly possesses, for there have been several duels which partake much more of farce than of tragedy. We have only been able to jot down a few instances of what may be called remarkable duels. But these are, we venture to think, quite sufficient to show what a plague-spot was removed from the body politic when duelling became, not only unlawful but unfashionable; when a man of honour was at last released from the necessity of setting his life against that of any worthless fellow who challenged him; when, in short, men recognized socially as well as legally, the commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder."

W. M. Townsend.

THREE MEETINGS.

I.

THE Castle hill at Hightown was a place of popular resort, for it commanded a pleasing prospect, and it had been laid out by the enterprising inhabitants into terrace walks, with here and there benches for the weary. Upon a certain bright August afternoon, a young man was carelessly strolling along one of the paths, when his eye fell upon a book which some reader had left on a seat. He took possession of the volume: first for examination; and, secondly, for restoration to its lawful owner, if the same might be discovered.

"Spenser!" he exclaimed after glancing at the title-page. Next he sought for some record of the possessor of the work; but there was no name inscribed in it, nor did it furnish any clue to its late proprietor.

"What am I to do with this?" he murmured,—"bothered as I am with an amount of honesty which will oblige me to take a world of trouble to find the rightful owner. Stay, though, did I not meet a lady descending as I came up the road? I wonder if I could overtake her? I will try. I should know her again, I think."

Thus resolved, he turned the way he had come, and so hastened his steps that he quickly saw again, just in advance of him, the form he was in pursuit of.

"I beg your pardon," he said, lifting his hat. "Is not this book yours?"

At his first words she had stopped and faced him. Gentleman, his dress, bearing, everything declared him to be. When she had satisfied herself by her rapid but complete survey, she answered him.

"Yes, it is mine. I must have dropped it." And she glanced down at her hands; empty now, save for her soft lavender-hued skirts and parasol.

"No, I imagine you forgot it. At least, I found it on one of the seats higher up the hill."

"I was reading there," she exclaimed: and transferring her parasol into the hand already responsible for her dress, she extended the right for the small volume.

"Thank you," she said in her full sweet tones: adding in her gracious politeness, "I especially valued the book."

"I am happy to have discovered it," he answered, and, bowing, went on his way, thinking of her pleasant smile and frank manner. When he had passed her on the hill he had glanced at her with just so much admiration as a fair, well-dressed woman will always evoke: but now that he had spoken with her, he felt a deeper charm. "What a nice girl," he said to himself. "She has a face that looks as if she could read Spenser."

By evening John Trevor had well nigh forgotten the trifling episode: but, having dined, he was hastening along the streets to pay a visit to some friends, when, turning a corner, a portion of a dialogue reached his ears and arrested his attention. Both voices were those of women, but women in very different classes of society.

"I dunno: theer's the church."

"But it is a cab, not the church I want," said the lady, somewhat impatiently. "Is there a cabstand anywhere near?"

"I dunno," again said the person interrogated. And John Trevor, ever good natured, advanced to see if he could throw more light upon the matter in hand than the young person in the dirty bonnet, with face to match, appeared able to afford.

"I do not think you will get a cab about here. And you are going further away from all chance of one," he said, as he came forward. And then he perceived that the lady to whom he spoke was the girl whose book he had restored on the Castle hill. Only, her pretty light robes were now partially concealed beneath a long cloak.

At the same moment she recognised Trevor, and half bowing, explained. "They told me at the Post Office that I should get a cab at the back of the church."

"It is wrong," he said, in his decisive way. But the next moment an idea occurred to him. "By-the-by, I recollect now, occasionally one or two cabs do stand by the church. It is only a chance, though, and not to be at all depended upon. I will run up and see if there be one now."

"I do not like to trouble you," she answered, the colour faintly rising in her face.

"It is merely a few yards—I know exactly where to look," he returned, with his pleasant smile, and was gone before she could offer any further remonstrance.

"No, there is no sign of one," he told her, when he came back defeated.

"How long a walk is it to the C. line station?" she asked next.

"It would take you half an hour, probably."

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" she murmured in her perplexity, while she stared helplessly at her watch. "I was told that I should get a cab here, and that I could drive the distance in ten minutes, and upon the strength of this, I delayed to write a note."

"They should not have said so," he answered gravely, feeling sorry for her dismay. "What time does your train go?"

"At twenty minutes to eight."

"And it is now five and twenty minutes past seven:—a quarter of an hour," he muttered in a reflective tone. "Are you a good walker?"

"Excellent!" she assured him, the cloud passing from her eyes, and her own sunny expression returning with reviving hope.

"Then," he answered, "if you will let me show you a short cut, I think you may save your train."

"I can walk very fast," she said eagerly, looking like it, as she drew up her tall slender form. "Just tell me the way, please."

"It is too intricate for me to direct you. I will take you, if you do not mind," he added, in soft, reluctant accents.

"I do not mind," she said, gently; but her fair cheeks flushed visibly, nevertheless. "Except—except for wasting your time."

"I do not think the consequences would be very serious if a great deal more was spent than this quarter of an hour," he returned, with a pleasant laugh.

There was silence for a few moments while they hurried, turning first to the right, then to the left, along a narrow flagged footpath, which took its tortuous course between houses and gardens on a higher level.

"Will you acknowledge now," he presently asked, "that you would hardly have got on without a guide?"

"Yes, I am willing to own it. I should not have discovered the road: at all events not without a great deal of enquiry."

"And hesitation would have been fatal so far as your train is concerned."

"I am truly obliged to you," she said, gently.

After a few more minutes of swift and silent progress, he spoke again, his tone kindly considerate, nothing more. "Are we not going too fast for you?"

"No; if necessary I can walk faster."

"There is no necessity: and I am afraid the pace is too much for you. Can I not carry something for you? How stupid of me! Give me your shawl," he said, peremptorily, stretching out his hand for a load, which he now first perceived over her left arm.

"I have nothing but my parasol. *That*," she said, laughing, "is the train of my dress."

"Oh!"

"Yes, we are burdened with a good deal of superfluous drapery, you should know."

"I do know it, to my deep regret," he answered, seriously. "How can I preach exercise when I see how women are shackled by their dress? How advise activity and employment when I am aware that they are already worn out by their silly apparel?"

His companion glanced up in surprise. He replied to her unspoken thought.

"I am a doctor, so I have a right to inveigh against the barbarity. There is not a worthier crusade that any liberator of humanity could start at present than a war against the fashion of women's gowns."

"You are not wrong, indeed," said his companion. "Such bondage! and such a weight in a heap of foolish frills and ornaments about our feet."

"A dangerous net for your own steps and others," he said,

smiling. Then, changing the topic: "Has it not been a lovely day?"

"Very, but it was nearly ending disastrously to me."

"Never mind; all's well that ends well. Here is the station: it wants two whole minutes of the time, and your train is not in yet," he said, as he conducted her to the waiting-room.

She sank on one of the cushioned seats that lined the walls. "I do not think I should have accepted your offer if I had known how far I was taking you," she murmured, that delicate pink again painting her fair face.

"A few yards more or less will not tell in the day's work," he said lightly.

"How can I express my thanks to you for the service you have rendered me?" Saying which the girl took courage to look up into his handsome face. A very attractive countenance it was, with its sharp, clearly cut features, a pale brown moustache just shading the mouth, that smiled so readily to reveal the white teeth. But the power of the face lay in the eyes, which were so dark that it was not perceptible at first that they were blue: truthful and inviting of trust in their gravity and steadfastness of regard.

"Do not name it," he answered to her grateful acknowledgment. "Good evening," and bowing he was about to withdraw.

She hesitated in shyness for a moment, then frankly extended her hand, with a softly-breathed "Good-bye."

He took the small fingers and held them for a moment in his strong, capacious grasp. "Good-bye," he said, gently. Then he passed through the door, and out of her sight. She spoke with him no more, and in fact believed him gone; but when she was seated alone in a comfortable carriage, she caught a glimpse of her late companion on the platform, as though he had waited to watch over her safety and comfort to the last.

In another half-hour Marion Holme had reached her destination, but it was a significant fact that she never narrated the past incident to her friends. Right merrily and with many a jest would she, under ordinary circumstances, have given the story of the chance meeting; but some feeling made her lay the experience up, a sacred treasure in her own heart.

A year went by, and Miss Marion Holme was Miss Marion Holme still. Offers in plenty had she: coronets were laid at her feet; men good and brave knelt for her favour. She did not spurn them, for her nature was gentle and kind, and she strove to bind up with her tender hands the wounds that she had unwittingly inflicted; but she would have naught to do with anyone.

Her brother, who was her sole guardian, her parents being dead, said to her one day roughly:—

"What do you expect? Are you waiting for a prince?"

"Yes," was the unlooked for reply that Charles Holme received.

"Are you mad, Marion?"

"Of course it was only a jest," she said.

"Only a jest," she repeated to herself, as though she was trying to convince her own heart. "My prince of chivalry, where are you? What has become of you, my prince?"

II.

A train was just steaming out of the large and busy station of one of our great northern towns. The passengers were hardly settled in their places: a young man, who had entered a first-class compartment at the last moment, was still engaged in tumbling what he would probably have styled his "traps" into the order he approved. At length the task was accomplished to his mind, and he was commencing to unfold a newspaper, when some sudden misgiving appeared to seize him, and he tossed over afresh all his paraphernalia in search of some article apparently that was not forthcoming. Then, in new concern he prosecuted a voyage of quick discovery in his pockets—with still growing dissatisfaction; for at the end he exclaimed with great heartiness:—"Confound it! what is to be done now?"

A slight stir and movement (probably occasioned by astonishment at the vigour of his language) drew his eyes to the further end of the carriage, where now he could dimly see the form of a lady, quite unperceived before in the twilight of the early winter's morning. At once he subdued his demeanour into the ordinary repose of a gentleman's manner, saying courteously:—"I beg your pardon, I thought myself alone."

The young lady slightly inclined her head in acknowledgment of his apology, and at the same moment by the increase of light due to their having emerged into the open country, each beheld the other plainly. There was no spoken word of recognition; but though the embargo of silence was laid on their tongues, their eyes flashed a message of recognition, and both thought of Spenser and the Castle hill at Hightown, and a hurried walk in the sweetness of an August evening more than a year agone.

"I hope you did not take me for an escaped lunatic," he said, laughing slightly.

"No," she answered, "I comprehended that you were without something you wanted."

"Just so; my overcoat. My constitution would survive that hardship, but the fact is I have therewith lost my money. Some friend persuading me that it was wrong to carry coins and notes in indiscriminate confusion, presented me with a purse. It cost me some labour, but I faithfully make use of it in gratitude," he added, smiling, and trying to recover from his annoyance. "And my self-sacrificing devotion has culminated in leaving it with all my worldly wealth behind me at the station in my overcoat pocket."

"And you will lose it?"

"It is not unlikely," he said, moving to the opposite seat to hers, to talk more at convenience; "but that is not the trying phase of the matter. I have to re-book at Dampcliffe, and I am on my way to keep an important engagement, and cannot afford delay: altogether it is a bore. Oh! friends, friends, they have been the bane of a man's existence from Job's days until these!" he exclaimed, half pettishly, half laughing.

Miss Marion Holme tacitly declined the wide ground for discussion the subject of friendship offered. But after a few minutes' silence she said timidly: "I have been thinking—thinking—" there she paused.

Trevor leaned forward to learn the result of her reflections. "Yes?" he said interrogatively.

"I have been thinking that I might be of use," she replied, now completing her sentence, and to make her meaning clearer, opening her purse, from which she took a £5 note.

"No, no," he said hastily. "Thank you all the same; thank you very much. I shall get on no doubt—a man can easily raise money—and let us hope they will be moderately intelligent at Dampcliffe Junction."

"You will not borrow of me?" she murmured slowly and painfully.

"It is not necessary, or I would not hesitate," he said gently, for glancing at her face, he perceived something of the enormous effort which her varying colour showed the offer had cost her.

She spoke again. "You once rendered me a great service"—he smiled, and rather liked her courage in alluding to it—"you once did me a great service, and I hoped I could do something towards repaying your kindness by helping you, that was all," she said meekly.

He looked at the distress and mortification written in her pure, soft eyes, and said: "If you will allow me to change my mind, I will do so, and avail myself of your kind thought. But I will not have the note."

Smiling in restored content of spirit, she put her purse into his hands. He took it, and glanced at its manifold contents. There were some silver pieces, a plentiful store of golden sovereigns, some memoranda, a dainty little pencil-case, her railway ticket, and some cards. He touched all delicately with a gentle reverence.

"I will take this," he said, pocketing the bank note, "if it will not inconvenience you."

"Oh! no, I have enough for my wants."

A silence fell upon them. Although he had practically finished with it, Trevor did not return Miss Holme her purse, but retained it within his fingers, which felt and clasped the leather almost caressingly. This girl was beginning to have a great charm for him: he wondered over his own sensations, failing to analyse them.

Presently he spoke again, but very softly came his words. "I do not know to whom I am indebted."

"It is not of any consequence, is it?" she asked in return, shrinking, she hardly knew why, from revealing her identity.

"You do not want to tell me your name?" was the rejoinder, with a smile. She looked up startled at hearing her secret thought thus translated into speech. "Then do not. Yet I must send you the money."

Miss Holme knitted her fair brow over this puzzle: she could scarcely understand her own reluctance to disclose her name, and yet she was clear in her own mind of intending most decidedly to keep it a mystery, if possible.

He, meanwhile, worked out the problem:—"You are going to London: that I saw by your ticket: but without that, I should have inferred it from your starting on your journey so early in the morning. I will send you the amount under cover of initials—A. B. say—to Charing Cross Post office; if you will call or send for it."

"Yes; thank you."

"That is settled then." And with that he began to talk to her of other things. With her intelligent conversation, and her lovely face raised in confiding simplicity to his eager regard, the time flew by; and the station was soon reached where he had to get out. When a porter had conveyed away his belongings, and the moment had come that he himself must descend, Trevor took possession of Marion's small hand.

"We shall meet again; I feel that we shall," he said; his eyes, the while, bent upon her, telling a plainer tale of emotion.

Marion trembled, and did not speak at all; and the white lids were dropped over her soft eyes, so that he could read nothing there.

III.

It was midnight; but the assembly rooms of Hightown were blazing with light, and from the open windows came sounds of music, for a ball was being held there that night. This fact alone was scarcely noteworthy, but this particular ball was nearly being distinguished by a tragic circumstance.

The large hall, where the dancing proceeded, was decorated with festoons of evergreens, and from these hung at intervals small coloured lamps. The effect was pretty; but, when the crowd was thickest, and the revelry and gaiety at their height, one of these pendulous stars broke loose and fell:—fell upon the skirts of a lady; and the gauzy fabric, of which her dress was composed, ignited instantly. The next moment the unfortunate creature was enveloped in flames.

A rush and confusion ensued. Cries of alarm or curiosity arose on all sides; while advice, mostly of a remarkable character, was freely tendered.

"Water!"

"Roll her in a hearthrug."
"But where is there a hearthrug?"
"A tablecloth will do."
"Then get it."
"Who is it?"
"How did she get on fire?"
"Sand: bucketfuls of sand—right thing!"
"Don't let her run out in the air."
"Fetch a blanket."
"Send for the fire-engines."
"And the escape."

The din of voices reached even the ears of a young man in the act of quitting the room. Upon the outcry, he arrested his steps, and retraced them to the scene of the excitement. The music had ceased; the dancers were all hurrying to one centre; the marvel was that, in the throng and tumult, the fire had not spread and the mischief increased. It probably would have ultimately been the case, but for one circumstance. While every person was calling for an impossibility or an absurdity, and doing nothing effectual, after the manner of people under such stress, one quiet, little, pale lady had unobtrusively stolen forward with a heavy shawl, and flung it, as far as her size and strength would permit, about the unhappy victim.

Others then, perceiving her plan, assisted to draw it more closely round the poor girl, so that by the time the new comer had reached the scene, the flames were entirely extinguished; only fragments of tinder still floated in the air, and strewed the ground.

"Let me see! What is it?" said the fresh arrival, Dr. Trevor, authoritatively: and some of those present, recognizing him as a medical man belonging to the town, gave way readily to permit his approach. He advanced to the sufferer, and the eyes, wide with alarm and pain, which met his were those of the girl to whom a few months ago he had said they should meet again. They had met. But thus! His heart, stirred before only in the interests of humanity, now throbbed with an intense personal anxiety.

"Save me! she cried, hope supplanting the torture and fright in the wide eyes, as she recognized him.

He laid hold of the fluttering, helpless hands. "Are you much hurt, much burnt?"

"My arms and shoulders: do cool them."

Trevor glanced at the parts, and could see only large surface burns: so he whispered, "Are you equal to leaving the room? Do you think you can walk?"

"Yes," she answered, her courage and spirits rising in the comfort and strength of his care. "I could not help it, Mrs. Cholmondeley: it was an accident." This last remark being addressed to a little lady who was wringing her hands over Marion and crying,

"Why did you set yourself on fire? What will be done?"

Perceiving that this lady was responsible for, if not actually a relative of the injured girl, Trevor gave her one or two plain directions, and the sufferer was quickly conveyed away into a cooler apartment in the hotel, which adjoined the Assembly Rooms. Having done what he could for the young lady's relief in the present, Dr. Trevor spoke to Mrs. Cholmondeley.

"I have applied some temporary dressing to the injured surfaces, and I should advise your getting the young lady home and sending for your own medical man. The morning will be time enough, though: she will do until then."

"But we live twenty miles from here—at C ——."

"Ah! she will not be fit for such a journey for a day or two."

"And I hope," said little Mrs. Cholmondeley, who was fidgety, but who was not without delicacy and refinement—"and I hope you will continue to take charge of the case."

Dr. Trevor bowed in grave formality, but he felt a thrill of delight at the prospect it opened out to him.

"We have plenty of friends here, but perhaps she is better where she is, poor child, until she can be removed to my house," Mrs. Cholmondeley continued, in a slow, reflective tone.

"If not inconveniencing you too much, it would be best." And, making an appointment for the morning, Dr. Trevor took his leave, and sallied forth into the air. Only, however, to saunter about in the moonlight and dream of the fair girl whom chance had again brought across his path.

"Shall I be a great fright from this accident?" his fair patient asked Dr. Trevor one day that Mrs. Cholmondeley had been called out of the room, leaving them alone, and free to chatter as their happy, foolish young hearts chose.

"No, Miss ——" there he suddenly checked himself, catching up his words on the brink of pronouncing her name.

"You know my name?" she said, glancing up into his face.

"I do know it, but I do not presume to use it until you give me leave."

"Marion Holme, that is it. Yes, you have my full and free leave."

"I shall take you at your word," said he, audaciously. "Marion —I like it."

Miss Holme felt as if she ought to reprove him, but was not quite clear in her mind how to specify his offence: so deferring his amendment for the present, she asked, "How came you there—to my help? I mean the night of the ball when I was burnt."

"Fate, I suppose. I had been at a dinner party, and had turned in for half an hour to the ball. I was in the act of quitting the room when the outcry arose, and detained me."

"You always appear when I am in want of care," she murmured.

He rose from his seat and stood behind her chair while he

spoke his next words: "My darling, do you know that it is the great hope of my life to have you always for my care—and my delight. Do not answer me now; let me have time, let me try to win you: do not send me away."

Perfect silence upon her part, but she trembled as the trees do when the summer breeze passes over them.

"Marion! speak to me!" he cried, with lover-like inconsistency, after a moment's pause, coming round to her side. Her face has drooped on her breast to hide her emotion from his devouring gaze: but she could not quite screen its blushes and radiance.

"Marion," he whispered, "will you give yourself to me? Bid me hope; look at me, dearest."

Still not a sign of encouragement, save that lower and lower still drooped her head; so he just took his two strong hands and uplifted the dear face. His jealous, throbbing heart was satisfied by the reply he read there.

When his raptures were in part quieted, and he was trying, in very gladness of heart, and for the pleasure of hearing her say the words, to gain her verbal promise and consent to their union, she had suddenly stipulations to make.

"Then you must undertake not to pick up any more books for ladies on the Castle hill," was her first suggestion.

"If the library of the British Museum lay there, I would not rescue a volume."

"Nor escort helpless young ladies to the station."

"Had railways to be abolished for want of passengers, I would render no help. At least," he added, with a kiss upon her sweet lips, "not without coming home to fetch you to take care of me."

She felt herself answered.

"Now," said he, "I have provisions to make. You, upon your part, are not to offer money to any penniless young man whom you may come across."

"Don't!" she cried quickly, laying her hand over his mouth. "You hurt me."

With surprise Trevor noted the crimson tide of colour that had instantly flooded her face: but, changing his tone into one of loving seriousness, he asked her, "Do you not think, my Marion, that I respect you the more for your kind thought and action?"

"Believe me," she said, with an earnest simplicity, "from the first I felt a peculiar trust and confidence in you—not to misunderstand me, even."

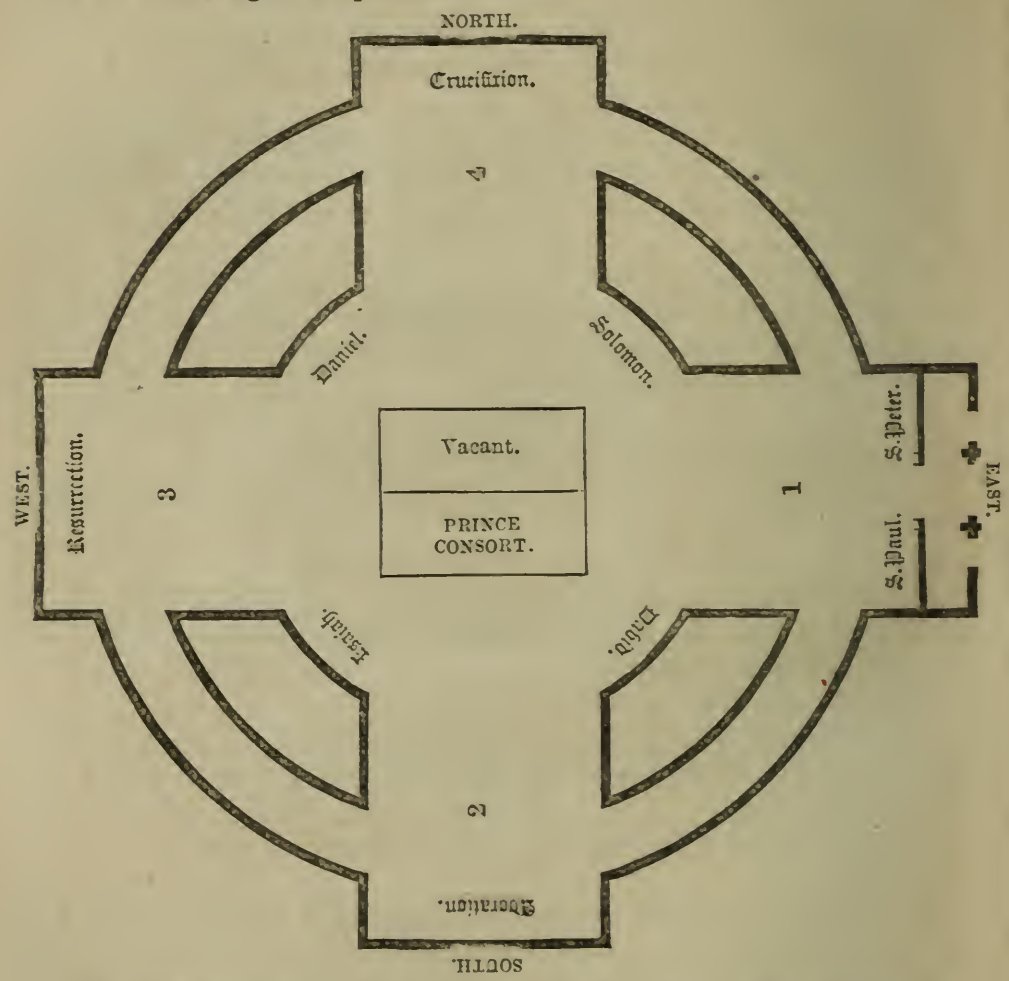
"My darling, trust me with your happiness through life, trust me with your dear self, and you shall never have reason to regret the confidence," he answered, solemnly.

THE ROYAL MAUSOLEUM, FROGMORE.

By E. H. Hudson, Author of "Louisa, Queen of Prussia."

II.

THIS rough ground plan will help the reader to understand the following description.



Externally, the edifice is seventy feet in length and breadth, not including the porch, which adds ten feet to the length. From the general level of the ground to the top of the cross is eighty-three feet. The spectator within the building looks from the floor to the top of the central roof, an elevation of seventy feet. The pavement is of inlaid polished marbles. Twenty-five different kinds, from Europe, Africa, and America, give their various colours to the floor and walls.* The walls are lined with polished marbles, exeepting in

* Twenty-five kinds of marble in the inside; eight granite, outside and inside; eight oolite, lime, and sandstone (or free-stones). All the beautiful inlaid marble work was done under the direction of Mr. Dines, successor to the late Mr. Thomas Cubitt.

THE ROYAL MAUSOLEUM, FROGMORE.

those spaces which are ornamented with painting and arabesque. The emperor-red, a soft pale scarlet, being in most cases so disposed as to represent the general wall-facing of the structure—thus its delicate red forms what we should call the groundwork of a picture or a piece of tapestry. It was all given by the late and the present King of Portugal. The colour contrasts very beautifully with the pure white Sicilian marble, from the neighbourhood of Carrara. The four large arches, with the cornice above the smaller arches, and all the fluted pilasters, or square columns set in the wall, and projecting from it, are of this pure white. The pilasters have bronze-gilt bases, capitals, and other enrichment. Each of them stands on a pedestal of polished buff Sienna marble, inlaid with Sicilian white, and the very full coloured magnificent French marble called red Languedoc. The four large niches made to receive statues are lined with the deep, dull, Campau-rouge, the darkest of the red marbles, bordered round by the pale scarlet of the emperor-red. The broad border is inlaid with Sicilian-white, blue-dove, the dark Anglesea-green, and the light Irish sea-green, a pretty effective green; it comes from the mountains of Connémara, on the west coast, between Donegal and Galway Bays. In these niches of the central octagon stand four fine statues of the prophets.

1. DAVID. Not the ruddy shepherd youth speaking his jealously ardent, first-recorded words of faith in the living God, but the aged monarch. His form is bent, and on his countenance, so beautiful in the day of his anointing, we see traces left by harrowing cares and sorrows. Yet, in its peaceful resignation, the old man's face is fair to look upon. He seems about to speak his last words of faith in the covenant—of trust in the promised seed—in the king whose throne shall be as the days of heaven. The statue is by Frederic Reutsch, of Dresden. The figure bears a tablet on which is written—

"The Lord is my rock and my fortress."—*Psalm* xviii. 2.

Above the statue shines the text from 2 Samuel, xxiii. 4.

"He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth."

The signification of this separated portion of a verse is obscure, but if we restore it to the passage from which it was taken, the meaning comes out in all its solemnity, pathos, and poetical beauty, and then we feel that here it is well placed.

2. ISAIAH. A fine upward-gazing face of a man who lives above the world while yet in it. The sculptor has admirably succeeded in giving to the eye the far-away look of one absorbed in meditation, or rapt in a heavenly vision. This is by Hermann Hultsch, of Dresden, was executed at Rome, after a fresco by Raphael in the church of Sante Maria della Pace. Above is the text,

"The liberal deviseth liberal things: and by liberal things shall he stand."—*Isaiah*, xxxii. 8.

3. DANIEL. As in the early prime of manhood. The face is full of intelligence, of deep thought and judgment. This statue is by Gustave Kuntz, of Dresden, was executed in Berlin. Above we read a few words from the glorious prophetical chapter which concludes the Book of Daniel :—

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament."—xii. 3.

4. SOLOMON. A noble, grave countenance ; but he looks on the earth, not above it. The attitude is dignified ; the uplifted finger betokens a teacher of his fellow-men : some touches at the corners of the mouth seem to bring out of it, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." The figure bears a tablet on which is inscribed,

"Behold, I have done according to thy words : lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart."—1 *Kings*, iii. 12.

A portion of the preceding verse is above the statue.

"Thou hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast thou asked riches."—1 *Kings*, iii. 11.

Over the statues, on the spandrels, are paintings of the Four Evangelists, by Consoni. Also, in the lantern above, the angels holding wreaths enclosing the royal monogram are by that artist.

The dome is lighted by eight windows in the clerestory ; each contains three lights, with semi-circular heads. Between the windows run the ribs of the dome, concealed by lines, composed of golden angels running up to the top centre point. They harmonize with the gold stars with which the blue concave of the dome is spangled. From the highest point of each of the four large arches of the transepts hangs an elegant lamp in bronze and gold, each bearing four large globes. These lamps are by Barbedienne, of Paris, who did all the gilt bronze work. They were given by the Prince of Wales.

The monument in the centre of the mausoleum is taken from designs of late Baron Marochetti, and the white marble recumbent figure of the Prince Consort was his last work. It is so successful, that when gazing upon it we forget the sculptor, forget the mausoleum, and the tomb. For the moment we are with Albert the Good, and he is with us, together resting in the Lord, who says :

"I am not a God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him."—*St. Luke*, xx. 38.

The Prince was buried in his Field-Marshal's uniform. Marochetti thus represented him, but over the uniform are thrown the robes of a Knight of the Order of the Garter. The tomb itself is a genuine sarcophagus, made large in order to hold both the Prince Consort and the Queen, wrought out of a single block of grey Aberdeen granite from the Cairngall quarries. It is said to be the largest block of wrought granite in existence, without a flaw. It stands on a plinth of black marble from Belgium, given by the late King of the Belgians.

The body of the Prince rests within the sarcophagus, on the left-

hand side, directly under the white marble effigy, and on that side of the monumental tomb is the following inscription in letters of gold :

Francis Albert Augustus Charles Emmanuel,
Duke of Saxony, Prince of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha,
PRINCE CONSORT,
Second Son of Ernest, Reigning Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha,
Born at the Rosenau, near Coburg, August 26, 1819,
Married February 10th, 1840, to
VICTORIA,
Queen of Great Britain and Ireland,
Died at Windsor December 14th, 1861.

At each angle of the sarcophagus is an angel in bronze, with clasped hands kneeling. Their large extended wings seem to give support to the lid of the sarcophagus, on which lies the sculptured form. Collars round the angels' necks bear these brief texts.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."
"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."
"Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."
"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The effect produced by lighting the lamps is solemnizing. A new radiant light beams out over everything, but centres on the recumbent figure, giving an almost life-like expression to the pale face, though no created light, no flame that man can kindle, nothing that can intervene to cast either a glow or a shadow, can disturb that beautiful tranquillity which speaks to us of perfect peace.

Four chapels recede from the octagon. In the first recess, or entrance chapel, the ceiling is decorated with a painting representing the soul in happiness, copied by I. Frankl, from a sketch by the Princess Royal, now the Imperial Crown Princess of Germany.

We have already contemplated the painting by Consoni, after Raphael, in the arch over the entrance gates. Seen from the octagon, it is effective, and the gold letters of the text chosen to solemnize it shine out strikingly on the blue ground.

Immediately over the brass gates is the following text in gold letters on white marble :

"Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice."—*St. John*, v. 28.

On either side of the gates are paintings of the Apostles St Peter and St. Paul. St. Peter holds the keys. Below we read his own simple words—his expression of faith :

"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."—*John*, vi. 68.

St. Paul holds the book, and also the sword, to denote the penetrating nature of his doctrine. Beneath we read :

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."—*Phil.* i. 21.

These paintings of the great Apostles are on a gold back-ground, in imitation of Mosaic. They are by Consoni, after Raphael's

compositions at the Tre Fontane, near Rome; a church and convent said to stand where St. Paul was beheaded. There, according to tradition, his head struck the ground three times, and three springs of water rose to mark the spots.

All the bas-reliefs in the Mausoleum are by Professor Consoni, modelled by Hermann Hultsch; there are two in this chapel. That on the left represents Sowing—below we read in German:

"It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption."—1 *Cor.* xv. 42.

Below in English:

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death."—*Hosea*, xiii. 14.

The bas-relief on the right is Reaping. Above in German is:

"The harvest is the end of the world; the repears are the angels."—*Matt.* xiii. 39.

Below in English:

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ."—1 *Cor.* xv. 57.

The small allegorical figures throughout the Mausoleum are by Galli, of Rome.

In the second, or left recess, or chapel of the Nativity, the ceiling is decorated with a painting of the Annunciation by I. Frankl, after Raphael. Pfaender painted the arabesque round it. The large painting in this chapel is by Consoni, from Raphael tapestry. The Virgin, with Jesus on her knees, occupies the centre of the picture. The most venerable of the Magi is prostrating himself before the Infant Saviour: he holds the child's foot. The other Magi, with their numerous suite, kneel farther back. The Virgin is seated outside a rude structure of unhewn stone, such as is still commonly found in Palestine. This one seems to have been partly built with the ruins of a former age; the wooden door is the only thing that suggests the idea of a dwelling-place.

The Virgin is in the conventional blue dress; over it flows a mantle of deeper blue, on which sits the Holy Child—a gentle, innocent-looking Child, with a sweet smile.

There are nine worshippers; the man farthest off is on a white horse. One near the Saviour is quite black, the negro cast of countenance. The variety seems to indicate the different races of men and ranks in life—all the families of the earth. Joseph is looking into a vase, one of the gifts presented by the kings of the East.

Above this picture is the text:

"That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."—*St. John*, i. 9.

Below:

"They shall show forth Thy praises," &c.—*Isaiah*, lx. 6.

The whole of this magnificent chapter should be read, to give the ideas intended to be conveyed by those few words. Many of those prophetic promises are not yet fulfilled.

On the left is a bas-relief of the sacrifice of Manoah, above which is inscribed in German :

"Der Knabe soll ein verlobter Gottes seyn von Mutterleibe an bis in seinen Tod." —*Richter*, xiii. 7.

"The boy will be devoted to God from his mother's womb until his death."

The German word *verlobter* has wider and deeper meaning than is found in our English translation of that verse.

The bas-relief to the right represents the sacrifice of Isaac.

Above it in German—Hebrews, xi. chapter; end of 11th verse :

"She judged him faithful who had promised."

"Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace and goodwill toward men."—*St. Luke*, ii. 14.

In this chapel of the Nativity three mothers are put before us—all women of strong faith—all especially chosen by God to be devoted to His use. In them we have examples not so much of active as of passive virtues. The conjugal obedience and patience of Sarah—the self-denial of Manoah's wife—the meekness of Mary.

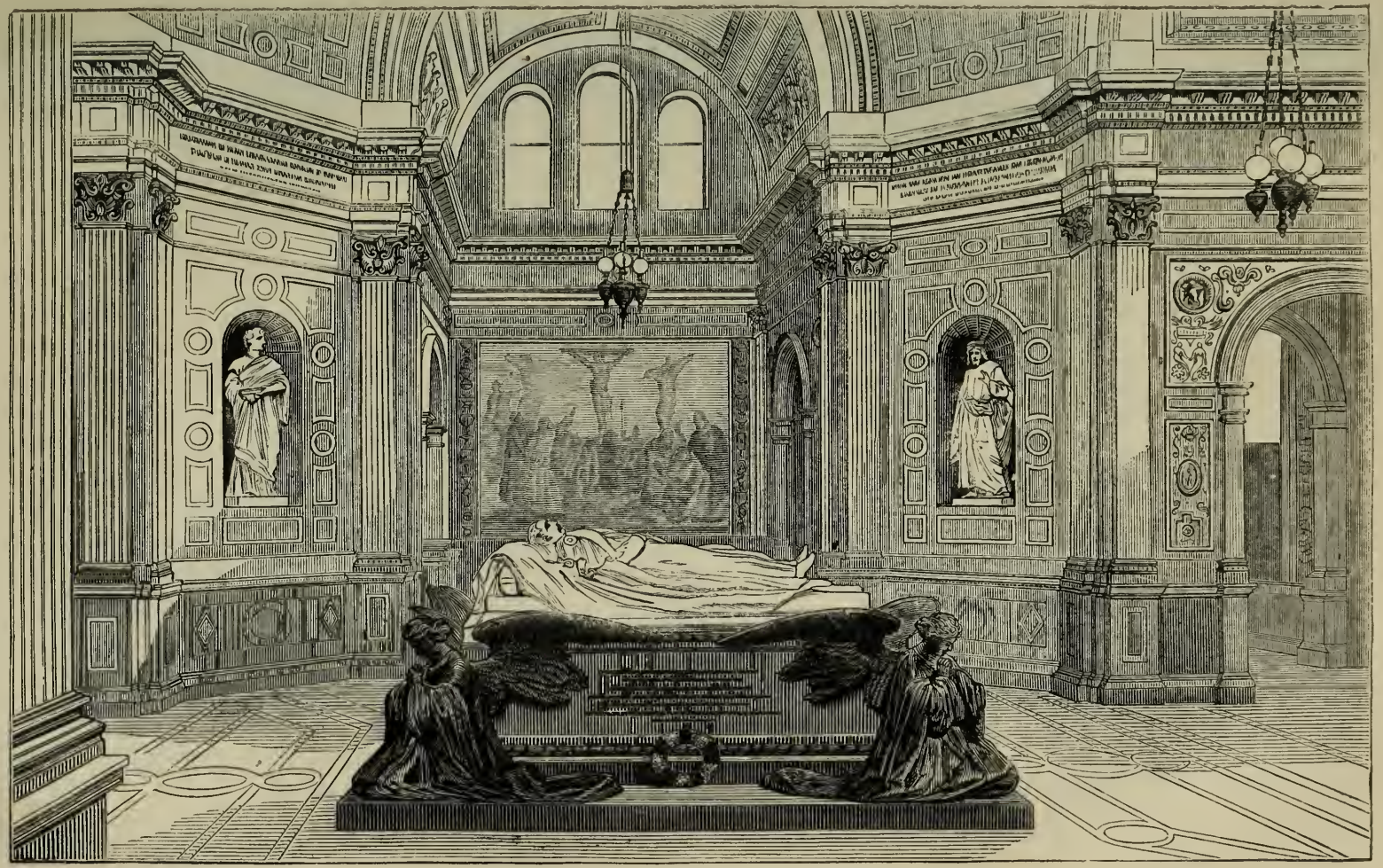
The subject of the last-named tablet may at first sight seem to make it more suitable for the chapel of the Crucifixion than for that of the Nativity. But, very properly, the motive, not the actions and event, has had the primary consideration. Works of love and obedience are the fruit, the offspring of faith. They prove the pre-existence of a living Faith. Moreover, the sacrifice of Isaac, though a divinely commanded and most striking type of the great sacrifice, is not a complete type, as it was not fully accomplished.

Jesus only could say as he hung upon the cross, "It is finished."

In the third, or centre recess or chapel of the Resurrection, on the ceiling is a painting of the Ascension by Z. Pfaender, from a cartoon by Consoni, after Raphael tapestry.

The large picture of the Resurrection is by Consoni, from Raphael tapestry, in the Vatican. We see the Redeemer in the attitude of benediction. The risen Saviour holding a triumphal banner in his left hand, is extending his right hand in the act of blessing, as he is going forth from the sepulchre, treading under foot the stone that had closed the tomb. On either side guards are struggling together in confusion or running away. In the back-ground we see Jerusalem, and the three women on their way to the sepulchre. Raphael's own sketch for this composition is in the Oxford collection.

This painting is, in almost every point, so consistent with the Gospels, that it cannot fail to bring their simple descriptions through the mind of every person well acquainted with them. When looked at by the light of Holy Scripture, that triumphal banner mars the truthfulness of the picture : but it is true to Raphael, and to the age in which he lived, and did wonders towards elevating the religious sentiment and artistic taste of the period. When we remember that Raphael of Urbino died in 1520, at the early age of thirty-seven,



THE ROYAL MAUSOLEUM, FROGMORE.

and think of what he achieved during the last twelve years of that short span, we must give glory, not only to him, but to that over-ruling Power which helps to fix the eye and nerve the hand of genius when it is taking a high aim—higher than most men care to take.

Above the painting of the Resurrection we read:

"Christ the firstfruits: afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming."—1 *Cor.* xv. 23.

Below:

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"—1 *Cor.* xv. 55.

The bas-reliefs in this chapel are, Samson Carrying away the Gates of Gaza; and opposite to it Jonah and the Whale.

The passage of Scripture that shines over the head of the son of Manoah, shows him as the type of One stronger than himself. The Psalm from which it is taken is one of praise and thanksgiving; like sunshine bursting through the clouds to gladden the wilderness, and to calm the waves of this troublesome world. Read the whole of the 107th Psalm. The 16th verse in German is over the tablet.

Below:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."—*St. John*, xi. 25.

A tablet, presenting two scenes, shows us Jonah thrown over-board into the deep sea and cast up by the enormous fish.

Above, in German:

"Behold a greater than Jonas is here."—*St. Matt.* xii. 41.

Below, in English:

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."—*Psalm* xxiii. 4.

Beautiful in its simplicity is the small table of pure white marble which, slightly elevated above the level of the floor, stands in front of the picture of the Resurrection, and under that of the Ascension in the ceiling. It is of the purest white Sicilian marble.

The front of the table or altar has as a centre piece, "The Entombment of Christ," in terra cotta. This bas-relief is modelled from a design by Raphael, formerly in the Crozal collection—the picture itself, one of the five which composed the predella under the large altar-piece, done for the nunnery of St. Antonio of Perugia, was very small. It has disappeared; where it is now is not known.

This copy is by Galli. The dead Christ is so true to the utter prostration and helplessness of death, that thought strongly rebounds from it to life, to victory over the grave.

On either side of this centre-piece is a panel cased in gold; each panel is of pale Irish green, surrounded by blue dove marble. Above the panels is a light elegant border in Irish green and buff Sienna.

On the table lie two books. At one end, the Queen's Book of

Common Prayer, plainly bound in purple; at the other, a Bible presented to His Royal Highness the Prince Albert, by the University of Oxford, June 15th, A.D. 1841.

In the fourth, or right recess, or Chapel of the Crucifixion, the ceiling is decorated with a picture of the "Bearing of the Cross," by I. Frankl. Pfaender painted the ornaments surrounding it.

The large picture of the "Crucifixion" by Consoni, is entirely his own, but he kept as nearly as possible to Raphael's style. Angels look down on the scene. The artist has closely followed St. Matthew's description, introducing the incidents especially given by St. Luke and St. John. We see the Lord's divided garments on the ground; upon the red vesture, which lies spread near the foot of the cross, dice have been thrown. A Roman soldier grasps a spear in his left hand, it may be that which is to pierce the Saviour's side. With his right hand he seems to be laying a wager, holding out the thumb and two fingers next it, and closing the other fingers down, as to this day is done by those who play the betting game of Mora—a very popular amusement among the lower classes in Italy, and it can be traced back to ancient times. Three Jews, among them a Chief Priest, are evidently mocking and reviling. We find all the characteristic figures and objects which the Evangelists have connected with the solemn scene, even to the long reed and the sponge in a basin. A bit of rock in the foreground is suggestive, for, from a cleft or crevice in the rock, a simple white flower is growing and blooming:

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

Or we may view it in another light. In the fragment of rock we may see the stony heart of man broken by the Mighty One:

"Sow—though the rock repel thee
In its cold and sterile pride,
Some crevice may be riven
Where the little seed may hide."—*A. Shipton.*

We see this picture of the Crucifixion between two most impressive texts—above, St. John, xiv. 2; below, St. Luke, xxiii. 34.

"I go to prepare a place for you."
"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The bas-reliefs in this chapel are "The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise," and the "Lifting-up of the Brazen Serpent."

The former is after Raphael's "Exile from Eden" and "The Consequences of the Fall"—two paintings, numbers 127 and 128 in the first arcade in the Vatican. In the Mausoleum, these subjects are united in one tablet. On the one side we see an angel with a flaming sword driving Adam and Eve from Paradise. Shame is the predominant feeling, concealment the strong desire. In vain they try to hide themselves from God, and even from one another. In

the other compartment we see that Adam has laboured on the ground, and is now sowing seed. Eve is seated under the most primitive kind of structure, a roof thatched with rushes, supported by rough poles, as cut from the forest. A tree shelters the rustic home. The mother is spinning; two boys stand beside her. Cain is grasping some fruit, which he seems to have taken from his brother, who looks as if complaining of the injustice. A large sleeping dog completes the picture of domestic life, as it may have been known to our first parents after the Fall. The texts above and below point to the second Adam, direct us to look to the Lord, a just God and a Saviour. Romans viii. 32; Isaiah xlv. 22; read preceding verse.

The bas-relief of the Brazen Serpent is less painful than that subject is made by some artists who seem to have chosen it with a view to displaying their own skill in depicting human agony in most horrible variety, rather than with the desire to show divine mercy providing the remedy. Here only three of the Israelites, still pursued by the fiery serpents, will not look above them. There is a peaceful expression on most of the faces upturned in the right direction: some look rapturously grateful for their own recovery, or for that of a dear one they are supporting, or a child they are holding up that he may look and live. The texts selected to dedicate this work of art to the glory of God are, in German—

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."—*St. John*, iii. 14, 15.

And in English—

"I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."—*St. John*, x. 11.

The eight larger windows in the chapels are divided on the inside of the dome by beautifully worked columns of Lizard Serpentine, with gilt bases and capitals; these and three smaller ones in the chapels were executed by Haensel, in Dresden, from designs, by Professor Ludwig Gruner. The angels in the windows of the corridor were all drawn from paintings by Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, by Frankl and P. Haendler, of Dresden, and were painted at the royal manufactory at Meissen. These angels are gems of art. Each full length figure takes a whole window. In each quarter of the corridor are three of these celestial musicians. Between every couple of harpers, trumpeters, or those who "sound the loud timbrel," or beat the triangle, stands one holding a music-book or a scroll. Thus curious instruments of bygone ages are introduced, which were used to assist in the public worship of God—of Him who was, and is, and is to come.

He made man a little lower than the angels to crown him with glory and honour—made him able to pray in lowliness of heart, that he may hereafter be fully capable of thanksgiving; able to join all the company of heaven in songs of everlasting praise.

The urns in the niches of the corridor, of the finest Serpentine, were executed from Gruner's designs by the Zoeblitz Serpentine Company, in Saxony.

All these treasures of art are, and must be, hidden treasures in this our generation. So secluded are the surrounding gardens, that the blackbirds, thrushes, and nightingales, and the sprightly squirrel, may well think these groves, lawns, and bowers, were made for them, so undisturbed is their enjoyment. The gates are never open except for two or three hours on the 14th of December, after the Royal Family has met in the Mausoleum to join in a short service, at which the Dean of Windsor officiates. The choir of St. George's Chapel chant selected psalms and sing hymns. Before they separate, the Queen, her children, and grandchildren, place wreaths of immortelles round the sarcophagus.

When the carriages have driven away, the people flock in, but very few of the many who long to enter have the privilege, or can obtain permission to do so. The scene is animated and interesting, as you watch it under the influence of the associations connected with it.

From the Long Walk, near Frogmore Gate, through the leafless trees, the Mausoleum is distinctly seen, where it is not screened by evergreen trees and shrubs, that shelter it all the year round. The dome rises above them, and over all glitters the golden cross. The sun may go down gloriously on a winter's day, casting a glow of heavenly colouring over all the azure fields of light—crimsoning the western sky—glancing on the earth amid the lengthening shadows, shining on the windows of many a home as fully as it shines on those of the grand old castle, over which the British Standard floats. Then, the cross of the Mausoleum, almost as bright as the sun itself, shows us that borrowed light, when it is given back, is real, because it depends for its existence on the fountain-head. When clouds—vapours from the earth—are permitted for a while to hide the sun, what can shine in our eyes? Not even this symbol of Redemption. It is so with every other visible sign put before us to strengthen our faith and to stimulate our gratitude. It is so with all things small and great; with the planets, which deviate not from their appointed course when we lose sight of them; with the dark body of the moon—our beautiful moon, whose praises have been proclaimed and sung in every land, through every period of time.

> "The Moon above, the Church below,
> A wondrous race they run,
> And all their radiance, all their glow,
> Each borrows of its sun."

This is equally true of the whole collective body of the Church, and of every faithful individual member, whether he be manfully fighting in the ranks of the Church Militant, or rejoicing with his victorious comrades and his King (the Conqueror of Sin and Death) in the Church Triumphant.

TWO YEARS LOST.

SUMMER and youth, love and roses, blue sky and careless mirth. These are all adjuncts of the sweet spring-time of the heart when it has been first awakened.

Maria Leigh was young: and not so very long ago was it that her heart had awakened to its spring-time. But she went about now more like a dead creature than a living woman. Wan smiles poorly veiled her inner trouble; and her hands were often pressed upon her breast as if the pain there was too sharp for endurance.

Three weeks ago she had been so different. Only three weeks! The world had looked almost too bright—such splendour in its moonlight evenings, such a glow of promise in the sunny days that grew and gained in beauty. That was all gone now. The year had not gained its prime, for midsummer was not reached: but the sadness of change, of disappointment, of waste, of failure, seemed to overshadow all things.

You would have smiled, perhaps, to see him who was the source of all this trouble. There was nothing particular in him to look at. Rather tall, squarely built, a good, sensible kind of face, and deep-set, earnest blue eyes. What was there in *him* to awaken the depths of poetry and passion—or to darken life? Had it been some young Apollo, delightfully handsome, gay, accomplished, brilliant, and superficial, why then, I grant you, it might have been understood. But this unassuming man, so quiet, so self-contained, so little distinguished in any way—you simply could not have solved the mystery.

He was but a country doctor, too, this Edgar Mervyne, and as yet only six-and-twenty years of age. Mr. Mervyne, the father, had been a doctor before him: but he died young, and left his wife and children to battle with the world. What a struggle it had been Mrs. Mervyne alone could tell. But, to the energetic and persevering, success comes in time. The elder son had obtained a good post in a foreign land; Edgar, the younger, embraced his late father's profession. Old Dr. Danford took him into partnership, giving him a third of his profits, and Edgar lived with his mother and made home happy to her by his dutiful affection. Looking at his broad shoulders, the little mother thought with joy that they were well-fitted to bear those burdens which had almost weighed down her own. Edgar smiled when she said as much: no burden should rest on her again if he could help it.

This place, Candelford, was a gay village, what is called an aristocratic one; and in the summer season it never lacked visitors, being near the sea. And the world went smoothly enough with Edgar

Mervyne and his mother. Dr. Danford, a rough old surgeon to his patients in general, was quite content to see that his young partner was liked as well as he was, if not better. And for miles round no evening party was thought complete unless Mr. Mervyne made one at it. The old doctor growlingly told him not to let the world spoil him: the young man shook his head in his quiet way, and said there was no fear of it.

Matters were in this state when Miss Leigh—the only daughter of Captain Leigh, ex-officer and gentleman—came home from school. She was eighteen: a sensible, good, sweet-faced girl, of gentle bearing and retiring manners, as a modest maiden should be.

And somehow—Cupid alone, whose ways are full of mystery, could have explained it—these two were at once attracted to each other. They often met at the houses of friends: and the young doctor seemed to find no place so pleasant as Captain Leigh's villa. Many a time, when he had paid his visit to the invalid upstairs—for Mrs. Leigh was ailing, and spent at least as much time upstairs as down—did he snatch a few minutes' leisure to sit with Maria; watching her fingers at their sewing in the morning, and listening to her songs in the evening twilight. The result was love. Love, on her side, deep, passionate, enduring; on his—well, that was best known to himself. He did not speak of it. That small third share of Dr. Danford's practice did not as yet justify him in asking for Captain Leigh's daughter. She would have a good fortune, it is true; but that, in his opinion, made it none the better.

"Do you know," said Maria to him one day, when he sat snipping bits of paper with her embroidery scissors, "that the Paxtons are going to have a visitor?"

"No. Who is it?"

"Some young lady from London. Very stylish, and very rich. A Miss Mortimer."

Mr. Mervyne broke into a smile. Maria also.

"It is what they said of her, I assure you. I called there with mamma yesterday afternoon—mamma thought the little walk would do her good—and they could talk of nothing but Miss Mortimer. Louisa said she was beautiful; Nelly added that she had been partly educated in Paris ——"

"None the better for that," interrupted Mr. Mervyne.

"And could speak half a dozen languages, and was always dressed to perfection," went on Maria. "How insignificant we girls down here shall be beside her!"

Mr. Mervyne, who had risen to leave, took a calm survey of the pretty girl before him; the delicate hands, the soft brown hair, the modest face, so sweet and blooming. "I cannot suppose that *you* have any cause for apprehension on that score," said he significantly.

Maria coloured at the words—and at what they implied. He watched the glow steal over her cheeks, he looked at the long eye-

lashes veiling the soft brown eyes, and his pulses quickened. How charming she was, this modest girl!—how lovely!

Tender words trembled on his lips: but he forced them back. "Too soon, too soon," he thought. "To ask for her yet might only invoke a refusal—perhaps an interdiction to our meeting. Perhaps—I think—she understands me."

Maria did understand him. She believed that she had his entire love, and that, in due time and place, it would be declared. She was perfectly content to wait that period; aye, though it were for years. To see him daily, to touch his hand at coming and going, to listen to his always pleasant voice, was bliss enough, making her days a very Eden.

Miss Mortimer arrived at Candelford. She made her first appearance in public at Mrs. Martin's croquet and dancing party, which took place on the following afternoon. A fresh face is quite an event in a quiet country district, especially one advertised as Miss Mortimer's had been, and everybody was on the qui vive to see it.

The impressions she made differed—as usual. Opinions differed. Those who had expected to see a brilliant beauty, one who must draw all eyes after her whether or no, had hardly words strong enough for their disappointment. *This*, Miss Mortimer; this the famous beauty! this dark, thin girl of two or three and twenty, with features so little remarkable; no bloom, no dash, no play, no sparkle; nothing to boast of but those great eyes that were too large to look pleasant. If this was what Paris and London called beautiful—why, Paris and London must have odd tastes. And her dress too! They had anticipated some dazzling wonder of the toilette, and could not understand the tulle dress and the black hair without ornament, save some milky sprays of acacia bloom. But others, keener judges, saw in this young lady a great capacity to charm; recognised in the soft flow of her garments, the slender grace of the flowers she had chosen, an artistic beauty and fitness. Long ere the evening was over they found their opinion justified. Miss Mortimer at rest was not effective. Neither is the piano when nobody is playing. You can easily look at it: a dark gleam of rosewood, so much of ivory and ebony. But a master hand strikes the keys, and joy and passion, glory or grief, rise from the swelling chord, and bear you onward resistless in their course. So with this girl when she dropped her mask of apathy. The slight features grew mobile with expression, the pale cheek warmed, fire lit up the great orbs. She was transfigured.

But her dancing was the enchantment. The young ladies in Candelford had not the benefit of a French master, and they went through quadrille and waltz with an honest enjoyment in the motion and the music. Not one of them had ever imagined anything like Miss Mortimer's floating grace or the atmosphere of poetry that encompassed it. It was a picture to gaze at and to hold in memory years after.

"What do you think of her?" whispered Maria to the young doctor in the course of the evening.

"I hardly know what I think of her," he slowly answered.

"Have you spoken to her?"

"Not yet. Will you dance this quadrille with me?"

They moved away amid the dancers; and so the evening came to an end.

"Well, Nelly," cried Miss Mortimer to Ellinor Paxton, after they got home and were undressing, "did I succeed? I hope so."

"What a question!" replied Ellinor. "Succeed! of course you did. But what interest can you have in these little rustic triumphs? It is like a prima donna singing at a shilling concert."

"I dare say the prima donna would wish the audience to applaud. She wouldn't like her voice to fall cold and lifeless even there."

"It didn't fall so. I mean the impression you made, Sophia. There was no end of enthusiasm. I am not going to make you vain by telling half I heard."

"Don't. It would be a pity to spoil such unconscious innocence as mine," laughingly retorted Miss Mortimer. "Who were the men, Nelly? Any one worth captivating?"

"For you probably not. The best match in the room was Arthur Lovel. He was very attentive to you."

"Yes; a pleasant young man: but I can see fifty better than he in town any day."

"To be sure. I know we must all seem very awkward and tame to you."

"Who was the tall individual talking with that pretty girl in pink?"

"Somebody entirely out of your line; a young doctor, just beginning the world, after going through much hard work to get the chance of doing it."

"And the girl?"

"Maria Leigh. The Leighs are one of our best families; still people think it may be a match in time, for they evidently like one another. Edgar Mervyne is very much thought of."

"In spite of his being fortuneless?"

"Yes, spite of that. He showed so much energy in fighting his way through all sorts of unfavourable circumstances. Then he is the best son in the world."

"Of course your neighbours are bound to patronise solid virtues! It is a pity that all these excellent qualities can't impart a little attraction to their possessor. What does Miss Leigh see in him?"

"Oh, he is very pleasant when you know him: very nice. Not the least in the world gallant; he never pays a compliment; the most sincere, straightforward man in the world—and so clever! I don't suppose you would appreciate him at all, Sophia; or he you."

"Thank you," responded Sophia, laughing. "And now we will say good-night."

Meanwhile, as the time went on, it was found that Miss Mortimer did appreciate Edgar Mervyne, and most perfectly. These three or four years she had been in society; and had become rather *blasée* of the artificial, frivolous men she had met in it. This young doctor, earnest, single-minded, was of quite a different stamp: the moment he entered Mrs. Martin's rooms, she had noted that fine head, that firmly-set mouth. A little chagrined that he had not approached her, she determined to fascinate him the next time they met. And she did her best for it—that time, and the next, and the next.

There is not much to be said in defence of Sophia Mortimer. She liked power, and here was a fresh object to exert it on. She understood the men of her own world pretty well; a great deal of seeming and very little reality; of elegant polish on a thin slip of veneering. "Sincere, straightforward, not a particle of gallantry!" If these were the characteristics of Mr. Mervyne, they were precisely what took her fancy just now. And so Miss Mortimer *set herself* to attract and win the young doctor. Win him for what? Ah! just for her own amusement, her whim of the moment. Any claim to him that Miss Leigh might possess did not trouble her in the least. It added to the pastime.

For the first two or three interviews that took place after their introduction, the aspect of affairs was not encouraging. Edgar Mervyne admired her, it is true, but much as he did the moon; a remote resplendency which he had not the slightest notion of appropriating. He talked of her sometimes to Maria, who talked back again without a shadow of foreboding. Such coolness piqued Miss Mortimer; she became more than ever determined to assert her power. For this, decided advances were needful, but *she made them.*

It gradually grew evident to even his unpresuming observation that this enthralling beauty liked to have him near her, looked for him on entering a room, was pleased to have him come and sit by her side. He felt gratified at this notice from her—for she had become the fashion, and all Candelford ran after her: how could he help running too, the frail human man? There was nothing like flirtation between them, no coquettish glances or lingering tones. They talked of every-day matters, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes with amicable dissent. Once in a while, not often or obtrusively, she spoke of foreign lands, their scenery, customs, manners, and he could not but notice the charm of her descriptions—for it had not been his privilege to stir beyond his own country. Something unique, ideal, tinged her thoughts and their expression. He said as much to Maria Leigh, who made but slight reply: in point of fact, a vague uneasiness was already cropping up in this poor girl's heart. And the time went on.

It went on so smoothly and gradually that Edgar Mervyne himself

could hardly say when the soft, ever true hazel eyes of his old love vanished from his dreams; and the dark orbs, full of fire or languor, usurped their place. As little could he tell how the every-day topics dropped from their discourse, which grew full of sentiment and meaning. Nor how the glances from those black eyes, which used to meet his own with friendly openness were downcast now, or stole at him furtively through their long lashes. He only knew that the days and nights were beautiful, unquiet, charged with a strange glory and restlessness such as he never had conceived. His love for Maria had been quiet and tender, stirring the emotions pleasantly; it blended with home life and daily duties. But this new passion was a thing apart; it came between him and all other ties, filled him by turns with bliss or torment. The man was bewitched.

As for Miss Mortimer, she was floating with the tide. Determined to interest, she had herself grown interested. She studied him that she might charm more wisely, and was herself charmed by the strength, the unselfishness of his nature. When to draw him out she paraded her own views only to hear them combated, she said to herself, "This is a man! He is earnest, noble, true." Ere she was aware, she had slipped beyond her depth. New and delightful feelings awoke within her, the reality of emotions she had so often simulated. And the next thing she asked herself was—what was to be the end of it?

There ensued a mental struggle. She thought of the little cottage home, the old fashioned mother, the humdrum country life. Of course she should not sink to *that*—but she would have to lift him out of it. Marry him!—a rustic Æsculapius! What a finale to her grand career—which she had always intended should terminate in a marriage of splendour! She refused to see Mr. Mervyne the next time he called, and then spent the evening in regretting it.

After that she said, "No matter." Her night of torment over, in which she debated the point with herself, tossing on her uneasy pillow, and found that ambition must yield to love, she rose up comforted.

"I have plenty for both, if it must be so," she said, alluding to her large income. "He has talent to get on, and we will make him a career. But—I doubt if it ever come to that in reality; he will think of that first before he thinks of me. He is fascinated now: but—well let the future take care of itself. We are in our summer—let it have its way. Perhaps the autumn winds will end it." And so gave herself up to the bliss of the passing moment.

Thus came Maria Leigh's unhappiness. Judge what it was for her to watch these two, pride forbidding her to show a trace of what she felt. Do not blame Edgar Mervyne too harshly. He had never told his love; diffident of his power to please, he had never presumed that it would be accepted; or, at any rate, that *he* would be accepted by Captain Leigh. And when this flood tide of passion overwhelmed him he found it stronger than he was—and he strove to comfort

himself with the hope that Maria had not cared for him. And so the weeks of the summer went on, and on, and so undemonstrative was her lover that Sophia Mortimer repeated over and over again to herself, "I doubt if it ever come to that."

It did "come to that." When the harvest moon was filling the nights with glory Edgar had spoken. All Sophia's doubts vanished in a wild whirl of delight. She surrendered absolutely, accepted him unconditionally, and confessed how much she loved.

Another week or two of lovers' bliss, during which the engagement was made public, and then Miss Mortimer had to go back to town, recalled by her aunt, with whom she lived. The young lady had no parents living, and her fortune was already her own. Mrs. Strahan had heard a rumour of her niece's doings at Candelford, and sent her a peremptory summons. Her son, Hubert, a dandified young fellow, vain and well off, with whom Sophia had enjoyed many a day's flirtation, opened the ball as soon as they were alone after her arrival.

"What's this we have heard about you, Sophia?—that you have gone and got bound, hand and foot!"

"Why not I as well as another?" she lightly answered, with a rush of colour.

"Because it always seemed to be your fate to lime the twigs for others, rather than to be caught yourself."

"Well, it's true, Hubert."

"But surely not that the fellow is a village apothecary!"

"You must choose your own terms. Mr. Mervyne is a young medical man, with talent to carry him to the top of the tree."

"Oh!" sneered the handsome Hubert coolly. "Does he patronize a Saville-Row tailor, or some rustic Poole? Who makes his boots? What perfumes does he prefer? Professional ones, such as rhubarb and peppermint?"

"Hold your tongue. You can't ridicule *him*. He is superior to it. Superior to you."

"Thanks. It's gratifying to know that."

"I am glad you think so."

"You mean to carry it off, I see, with a high hand. But I am not blind."

"Blind!"

"Yes. You are repenting already. Oh, Sophia, I blush for you! What a sequel to all your previous conquests!—think how many desirable men you might have had at your feet! It must be a savage country down there, or you never would have done it. If I had known you were so hard up for proper suitors, I would have taken compassion on the place and come on myself."

"You were not needed. There were several facsimiles of *you* within reach."

"How amusing! And when will this princely cavalier be trotted out for the benefit of admiring friends?"

"Hubert, you are very disagreeable. What have I done that you should treat me so?"

His manner changed. "I beg your pardon. Let us be serious then. Are you really engaged, Sophia?—irrevocably?"

"Yes, I am."

"And can it be that you have *thought* of what you were doing?"

"Yes, again."

"I am afraid you have made a mistake," he said, and she had hardly ever heard him speak so seriously.

"I think not," she answered—but somehow she did not feel so brave as at first. It was far easier to be brave by Edgar's side than to have to fight his battles in his absence, and amidst this covert condemnation. "I know there is nothing in his circumstances to recommend him. It is only himself!"

"Himself! The personality must be of weight."

"It is. 'Tis for that I have chosen him."

"And you are willing to give up fashion and place—to give up caste."

"Perfectly willing. But I don't know what you mean by *caste*."

"Poor little woman!" said Hubert, not unkindly; indeed there was a strange depth of compassion in his tone. "You deem all sacrifice so easy now—but how soon you will find that you have not the strength for it. But I suppose it is of no use to talk to you at present?"

"Not a bit," she answered, laughing, as she left the room.

But the laugh was forced. Alone, a shade of sombre thought stole on her mood. This was the way that everyone would take the news—with wonder, pity, sarcasm. She had foreseen it before: but somehow it had not come home to her in all its disagreeable reality. "Well, let them," she said, defiantly, remembering Edgar Mervyne's farewell look. And taking out some notes he had written to her, she forgot her vexation in them.

"Egad, but it's a pity!" ejaculated Hubert Strahan, as she left him. "How handsome she was as she stood up for the fellow—what flashings from her magnificent eyes! But she will be miserable if she marries him—and so will he be, if he has the sense to see it; she will eat out her heart with chagrin. A common village apothecary!—Good heavens! If the folly does not come to an end of itself, we must intervene."

The world and his wife came back to town, winter approached, and the usual gossipping and gaiety re-commenced in the set Mrs. Strahan lived in. Sophia, courted as ever, went here, there, and everywhere. It seemed that her whole heart's life lay in society's toils. Yet the summer romance was not forgotten. There were quiet morning thoughts, tender evening reveries. Delicate missives sped to the distant village and brightened Edgar Mervyne's winter. One

sole cry seemed to comprise their purport—that he should come and establish himself in London.

A call more easy to hear than to comply with to a young surgeon whose guineas were of the scantiest. However, Edgar accomplished it at last. A friend whom he had known at Guy's hospital got him a place with a doctor in practice near Holborn, and who wanted an assistant in his work : in time it might lead to a partnership. The spring was advancing when he came up and took possession of his new home—utterly unconscious that the locality did not seem sweet to fashionable ears. Sophia might have told him better had she been warned : but he had kept the negotiation a secret, wishing to surprise her. She could only make the best of it.

Now, Sophia expected life was to be once more an ideal, as during the past delicious summer. She had felt herself, of late, getting back into the old way, measuring things and persons by the old standard. Edgar's coming was to rescue her from all this, and bring her up again to nobleness, and belief, and the beauty of a hearty purpose.

He came to Mrs. Strahan's as often as he could—as often as the exigencies of a very large practice allowed him.

He was introduced to society. Society, though civil, gave not the least evidence that it was enchanted. Somehow he did not assimilate well with the artificial society of fans and pretence and drawling tones ; and society did not assimilate with him : once or twice society indulged in a covert laugh at his expense. No : he would attain eminence in his calling, but he was not fitted for the drawing-room hero. Sophia, disappointed, chid herself. What did she expect, she asked. And a little voice, hushed as soon as possible, kept suggesting that Edgar was different—or had looked different in the country. Could it be that he wore those ill-fitting boots last August? Love and boots ! She felt the incongruity : but she could not drive the thoughts away.

And there were other troubles. "Edgar," she said to him one evening, "do you know that you are pledged to Mrs. Fitzhugh's to-morrow night?"

"Am I? Who has pledged me?"

"I have, sir,—who else has a right to dispose of you, pray?" she added, with pretended arrogance, giving him at the same time one of those glances which he could never meet without a thrill of ecstasy. It took a minute or two to calm his pulses down.

"No one, certainly," he answered, "no one, but you. But I do not think I can go, Sophia."

"You *must* go."

"If my engagements allow me. There's a good bit of sickness abroad ; and Mr. King is not very well, himself."

A haughty shade stole over her face. She was one of the last to brook contradiction. "Mrs. Fitzhugh will never forgive you if you stay away. I promised you should be there."

"I hardly think she is so vindictive."

"Well, then, *I* never will."

"Little despot! But listen to reason. I have so much to do just now: a doctor's time, you know, is never his own."

Sophia's frown grew darker. "I think there is always some excellent excuse provided whenever I want you to do anything, Mr. Mervyne."

Edgar looked at her, astonished. "Do you call that just?" he inquired, gravely.

"Yes," she answered, recalling three or four evenings when he had been unable to meet her. "I have seen it this long, long time. You don't care to be with me ——"

"Sophia!"

"It is so," she said, nervously pulling to pieces the beautiful rose she held, which he had given her; "you don't wish to meet my friends, or to gratify me. Your profession is a great deal more to you than I am!"

"Think what you are saying, Sophia! My profession is one thing; you are another. All the time I *can* spare to you, I do. Do you see how you pain me by these accusations?"

"I don't care;" and the mood ended in a burst of tears. What could a lover do but kiss them off, protesting against the folly of her suspicions, soothing her with vows of unfailing affection. But, having once assured her that only duty could stand in the way of her commands and wishes, Mr. Mervyne expected to be believed. He was not prepared for fresh petulance, for renewed complaints whenever he failed to make his appearance at some ball or dinner, and he resented them as an imputation on his faith. Utterly sincere himself, he did not comprehend that Sophia said these bitter things with only half belief. Incapable, himself, of wounding her, he knew not how reckless pride and vanity can be of others' feelings. These difficulties generally ended as the first had—with semi-penitence on her part and reconciliation: but the peace that followed grew briefer and briefer.

"You are unhappy, Sophia?" said Hubert one morning, as she sat with her white hands crossed listlessly, dejection written in every line of her face. "Tell me what it is?"

"It is nothing I can tell to anyone."

"Not to *me?*" he asked, with meaning. "You and your lover are at variance, my dear. Can't I help you?"

"No, you can't. And if you could you shouldn't. Just please to take yourself away."

Hubert smiled. The breach he had anticipated was coming.

Was it? Perhaps. Sophia sat on, sulky and sad. Things were turning out so differently from what she had anticipated. Edgar was different; not what she had thought him, not what he was at first. Her shallow, impulsive nature, changing in a moment from petu-

lance to tenderness, could not understand the quiet strength of his affection. She was miserable that it did not overflow in passionate words, endearments, constant attendance. She wept her beautiful eyes out over his imagined coldness, and met him with reproaches that wounded and estranged.

Another thing, their tastes and pursuits were so dissimilar. These balls and kettledrums and insane gatherings, which made her life, he hated. The social, sober parties at Candelford, where every lady knew each other, were quite different. People went home to bed at eleven o'clock there: here, it was thought early if they met at that hour. And as Mr. Mervyne once remarked to her, how, if he sat up half the night, could he be fit for his duties in the morning. During the course of the summer, Mr. King, who was ill, had to go away for a long rest, and Edgar could not often get up at all to Kensington-square. Sophia grieved: but resentment mingled strongly with her grief. Her reflections were rebellious. There were *some* men she knew, who would have given her all the idolatry she craved: and who was he that refused it? She had condescended—by this you may know that love was far in its decline—to a man whom everybody thought beneath her; and how was she rewarded?

"It is hard to see you so unhappy," Hubert remarked to her, and there was true sympathy in his tone: "and yet you condemn me to silence."

"Speak, then," she answered. "I have not so much sympathy given me, that I can afford to refuse a kind word."

"Not much sympathy! This from you, so beautiful, so beloved!"

"*Once*," she said bitterly—"not now."

"Why not? What has wrought the change?"

"I don't know," she answered drearily. In truth she did not fully understand.

"I could tell you if you would bear it. You are trying to achieve impossibilities—to kindle fire in ice—turn the veriest prose to poetry. You have made a choice unfit for you. The man is a worthy person in his way, I acknowledge it, sterling and true; but he is about as unsuitable to you as an owl would be to a humming-bird. Neither can he expect to comprehend you. The greatest kindness to him, as to yourself, would be to break the tie between you."

"No, no," she said hurriedly, "I can't do that. Not yet, at any rate," she added to her secret self. But the idea came up sometimes. It flattered her vanity that Hubert believed her uncomprehended where she ought to be most understood, most admired. And that simile of the owl and the humming-bird caught her fancy: her own gay, airy, sunny, tripling nature would never mate well with Mr. Mervyne's solid, steady-going virtues.

At the close of summer, Mrs. Strahan went on the Continent, carrying her niece with her. Hubert went also in their train. The young doctor had to stay at home and take care of his patients:

there could be no holiday tours for him. Be you very sure that Hubert Strahan, who liked his cousin fairly well, and her fortune very much, took care to improve his opportunities.

In November they were back again. But—she had been a whole week at home before she let Mr. Mervyne know of it. He came up on the following evening, and the old intercourse was renewed.

But it was not what it had been, on either side. He would come in late, often weary, preoccupied with grave cares; she was more frivolously worldly than ever, and she flirted openly before him with her cousin Hubert. Nothing loth was Hubert Strahan to show his power; to let the country doctor see that he had become more to Sophia than he was. He had admired Sophia always: her wayward impulses, her fitful grace, her charming fits of petulance stirred his dilettante nature to enthusiasm; he fancied himself in love with her. The matter was brought to a close by Mr. Mervyne.

"Do you think that things are going on satisfactorily with us?" he asked Sophia one morning in spring when he had called purposely to speak, and had found her alone.

"No," she briefly answered. "It is your fault."

"Nay, I think it is not my fault, Sophia."

"You are so much changed from what you were."

"And you are changed," he replied. "Perhaps the truth lies in the fact that we now know each other better than we used to."

"If you wish to give me up, you should say so."

"It is for you to say that, Sophia. It may be that you have discovered that we are not suited to one another: that a union between us would not be for the happiness of either."

"That is enough: I see what it implies," she said, rising haughtily. "Then we part, Mr. Mervyne. We will say farewell now."

"Let us not blame ourselves too much," he said kindly, as he put out his hand. "We made a mistake, but we have been fortunate enough to find it out in time. Let us part in peace and pleasantness."

She could not resist the steady blue eyes that were gazing into hers with all their honest earnestness, and she put both her hands into his.

"It has been my fault, Edgar," she confessed in one of her quick impulses. "Do forgive me."

"I do indeed. And I wish you every happiness with your cousin," he added in a low tone; "wish it sincerely."

A blush rose to her face. "What makes you say that? There's no cause for it."

"No? Then I think there will be. I have not come here with my eyes shut, Sophia, and could not fail to see. Farewell. May God bless you."

So they parted in peace. And that same week the wedding-day was fixed between herself and Hubert Strahan.

But Mr. Mervyne had received a pill that was bitter to swallow. The fault was his, he told himself, not hers. Why had he allowed himself to become fascinated with this gay-winged butterfly, when a girl more sweet and worthy had already laid hold of the better portion of his heart. Anyway, he had succumbed to her, she had fooled him, and he now could only make the best and the worst of it.

Whether he would have gone back to Candelford of his own accord, remains unknown. But there came an epistle to him from Dr. Danford, asking him to go, and holding out the inducement of a half share now, and the full practice later. Mr. Mervyne leaped at it, metaphorically speaking: more thankful than he would ever tell to get away from that place of his mortification, London. And the old doctor welcomed him with open arms, and the sick in Candelford held a jubilee.

He and Maria Leigh met once more. She was unmarried yet, and prettier than ever. He had not dared to think of her again—but—the deep blush, the trembling tones told a tale. Old memories came back, old fancies, old feelings: and somehow they fell at once into their old intimate, confidential footing.

Mrs. Leigh was dead. The captain finding himself somewhat solitary, and growing infirm besides, would have had the young doctor always at his house: so that he and Maria were more together than even they used to be.

He, Edgar Mervyne, grew to wonder whether she would think a heart worth having that had made itself a foot-ball. And wondering, he lingered with her amid the garden's shade, and in the drawing-room twilight. And at length he grew to think that, with his improved prospects, with the good practice that would shortly be his, he might dare to ask her.

Her answer was a happy blush and a rush of tears. Captain Leigh's answer was of a more practical nature.

"You rascal! I saw what it was coming to: I've watched you both. Look here: you shall only have her upon one condition—that you come here to live. The house and everything else will, you know, be hers when you've got rid of me. Come! shake hands on the bargain."

Thus it all came right at last, which is more than can be said of lovers' strayings every day. Edgar Mervyne, happy in the brightest home, with the dearest wife in the world, tells Maria that he can never forgive himself for those two years of delusion, and calls them two years lost.

THE LOTTERY IN ITALY.

IT is a very immoral thing, we are told, but it flourishes with all the unabashed pertinacity of vice.

It is a source of large revenue to the State, which, in the present condition of Italian finance, could ill afford to be high-minded.

It permeates the whole existence of the poor, in whose limited horizon it discloses golden vistas, all the more dazzling for their indefiniteness. For the sons and daughters of toil, for "decayed" gentlefolks, for half-starved priests, it is a fairy vision whose contemplation distracts them from the squalid realities of existence. The three great events of household life, birth, marriage, and death, furnish valuable numbers on which to play. A widow is rarely so utterly inconsolable for the loss of her spouse that she cannot turn him to account by risking half a franc or so on the date of his death, of his birth, the number of days he was ill, and so on.

Dreams, however, are the chief source of inspiration. Some dreams are lucky; others are of the blackest omen. To play on the latter is to fly in the face of Providence. Should any numbers, but especially a magic triad, occur in a dream, it were the purest perversity not to play on them. Of course, thirteen is a numeral of the highest importance. In itself it is the number of death, *i.e.*, it must enter into the five numbers selected on anybody's decease. But wherever it appears it is big with fate, and must not be overlooked. Occurring as it did lately in the name of the new Pontiff, it furnished obvious indications of the workings of fate. It was universally played on, and came out in Rome. For different numbers appear each week in the different cities, and some unlucky wights have the mortification of seeing the numbers they have anxiously selected come out in the wrong place. This happened lately to all the devout gamblers who played *in Rome* on the numbers suggested by the death of Pius IX. It did not seem possible to the sons and daughters of Holy Church that the late Pope's numbers should turn up anywhere but in the City of St. Peter. And so all over the kingdom people staked their money on "the extraction of Rome." Great was the consequent consternation when it was known that the numbers had indeed appeared—but in Florence! By a curious coincidence, which, to the superstitious, was probably not devoid of political significance, the numbers of the King's death had come out the previous month in Rome.

The system of the Lottery is this:—Each time one plays in the Lottery, one has the choice of any five numbers, from 1 to 99 inclusive. But there are certain numbers which the general superstition

agrees to associate with certain events—as 48 with suicide from a pistol-shot, 13 with death in general, and so on. To play on a death and to leave out 13—or to play on a suicide from a pistol-shot and to leave out 48, would be regarded as an act of reckless folly. The new Pope being Leo XIII., 13 became an obvious number to play in connection with him, although it did not, of course, in this instance, represent death. The other numbers chosen would depend on the lore, or the caprice, of the player; but they would probably correspond to the year or the day of the Pope's birth, the date of his accession, the number of the canopy he sat under in the conclave, the number of votes by which he was elected: in all *five* numbers.

In each large town of the kingdom there is what is called the "extraction" of the Lottery, which takes place once a week on a Saturday morning. The Lottery being a source of State revenue, it will be easily understood that the Government would be too often a loser if identical numbers appeared in every place. Consequently the extraction is managed in such a way that the same five numbers could, only by an extraordinary coincidence, appear simultaneously in two towns.

This is the method employed:—The 99 numbers are put into an urn, which is made to revolve. A little boy then puts in his hand, and pulls out five numbers successively. This takes place, as regards the principal office, in a large hall, which is always thronged with people. The numbers are called out by a clerk, each as it appears, and the news of them spreads to the crowd in the street. They are then put up in the windows of the branch offices.

Each player may stake his money on the extraction of any town that he likes. When the King died, the numbers played by the majority of the public on his death came out in Rome, but nowhere else. The numbers of Pius IX.'s death, on the contrary, were extracted in Florence, but *not* in Rome. The numbers of the new Pope appeared in Rome. The result of such a run of luck (all local though it was) for the public, was a heavy loss on the part of the State, and an increased faith on the part of the people in the Lottery.

The late Pope's numbers were naturally expected to come out in Rome, from his connection as Pontiff or King with the Eternal City. When the numbers failed to appear there, it seemed to the superstitious as though the very stars in their course fought against the Temporal Power of the Church; and this impression was of course heightened by the previous extraction, in the new capital of united Italy, of the King's numbers.

Certain persons come, by some chance or another, to be regarded as singularly fortunate in guessing successful numbers. They are then the objects of admiring awe on the part of their relatives and friends. The damsel in the fairy-tale, out of whose mouth pearls and diamonds dropped as she talked, is the only parallel in the way

of extraordinary luck that suggests itself. People are still alive in Tuscany, who can remember a good priest named Padre Ambrogino, who had acquired a reputation of this kind. He could not walk the streets of Florence for the crowds that beset his path; and his habit hung in strips from the eager fingers that clutched at it. When worn out at last with his devotees' importunities, he would raise his eyes from his breviary and—as it were—fling them the five numbers for which they clamoured. His memory is still held in veneration; and in the little town of Prate, a journal, published weekly and devoted exclusively to news of the Lottery, is called after him. His name was really Ambrogio (Ambrose), but the people, out of their love for him, called him by the endearing diminutive of Ambrogino—little Ambrose. Just as you, reader, say "dear old Jack" of someone who is quite young.

For such as do not know the principles of the Lottery, it may as well be explained that only five numbers can be played at a time.

The simultaneous appearance of the whole five played by any particular person is a stroke of luck almost unheard of. Consequently, it is usual to choose five numbers so as to increase the chances of success, but to play only on three, two, or one. A *terno secco* (literally *dry triad*) is the expression employed when the money is staked on an alternative of three numbers or none. Then, if the three appear, the gains are great—5,000 francs for every franc, or £200 for 10*d*! But if only one or two of the three come out, the player wins nothing. The more prudent generally content themselves with playing an *ambo* and a *terno*, *i.e.*, two or three numbers according as it happens. They then win a fair sum on the three or a lesser one on the two. The result in either case is far below the intoxicating splendour of a *terno secco*. Those magic words constitute the hope always possible, rarely grasped, of many an Italian's life. Everybody has a story to tell of some friend, or friend of a friend, to whom the lucky chance befel—lifting him in one glorious moment from poverty to wealth. For the rest, among players in the lottery as among all gamblers, there is invariably a proportion of fortunate ones. Some of these attribute their success to a system; others to chance. They are for the most part, of course, people who are satisfied with moderate gains, and who play regularly every week. For the poor municipal employé, the forty francs or so a month which he thus acquires is a very large addition to his miserable salary. To the woman of the people, the ten sous she stakes weekly represent an outlay as certain, as favourable, and more fascinating in result, than the same sum invested in starch for her washing or wool for the knitting of socks.

The numbers are extracted on each Saturday morning in every town. It is a curious sight to see the crowd that gathers round the central office at the hour of publication. Every degree of anxiety, expectation, eager hope, is depicted on the more expressive faces.

The fat, good-humoured ones have a kind of ripple of interest just breaking the surface of their stupidity. All ears are strained to catch the numbers as they travel from the hall. A quiver runs through the crowd as the moment of certainty arrives. A curious murmur compounded of various emotions—triumph, resignation, rage, breaks out as suspense is over. Then begin recriminations, particularly on the part of the women. "I told you so," says an eager little sempstress reproachfully to a crest-fallen male relative. "You never will listen to *me*," remarks another woman to her husband, with all the resentment of unacknowledged superiority. He looks sheepish, and would like to throw the blame on Fortune. But he has a vague conception of that deity, who is a long way off, while his wife is very near and very voluble. Against the hard fact of her indignation his excuses break weakly, and so he holds his tongue. Not so two sisters who walk off quarrelling violently; nor a vivacious little man—probably a barber—who gathers his five fingers into a bunch, and casts them, as he talks, into the face of his listening neighbour.

In Florence, as everybody who has been there knows, there is a society called the "Brothers of Mercy." Their duties are to carry the sick or the victims of an accident to the hospital. They wear a long black garment, and a hood which covers the head and face; two holes made in the visor enable them to see. Thus attired they have an appearance which is both lugubrious and highly picturesque; and nothing much more startling can well be imagined than to meet them with their sad burden, turning on a moonlit night out of one of the narrow streets of the City of Flowers. The effect is strongly increased by the red glare of the waxen torches which they carry. When their services are needed, the members of the society are summoned from all parts of the town by the tolling of the great Duomo bell. This is also a signal for a crowd to gather in front of the little chapel of the fraternity in the Cathedral Square. Here the brothers assemble to don their black robes and fetch the bier. Here, too, from time immemorial it has been the custom for a priest to appear and announce to the expectant crowd the nature of the accident which has occurred. A simple-minded person, seeing the throng and learning why it waited, might be disposed to attribute its curiosity to humanitarian sentiments. If he only stays and listens, however, he will be rudely undeceived. The priest, with an air of utter indifference, in due time makes his appearance. Scarcely glancing at the crowd, he lifts his voice and calls out carelessly: "A suicide from a pistol-shot outside the gates." A slight but distinct commotion is visible in the listeners, and a woman turning rapidly to a neighbour asks: "The number, then, is forty-eight?" And on that suicide from a pistol-shot they all go off to play!

Up to a period which is still in some men's memories guards had to be stationed at night round the newly-made graves in Tuscan cemeteries. For the people had a custom of a horrible

and ghoul-like grotesqueness, from which no representations availed to turn them. They went in groups of two and three, after dark, to dig up any recently buried corpse, which they then decapitated and thrust once more into its desecrated grave. The head was carried home and the brains were picked out of the skull. This was dropped into a cauldron of boiling water, with a number of little wooden balls on which were the lottery numbers. As the water seethed and bubbled the balls danced up and down. Their motions were eagerly watched by the seekers of fate. Those balls which finally gathered closest round the skull were held to be lucky above their fellows, and the numbers they furnished were in due time played on. With what result history deponeth not. Nor would the result much matter—as far as any hope of eradicating the superstition was concerned—for is it not a truism to say that for believers in such lore one favourable coincidence will outweigh a hundred disappointments?

The Tuscans have a legend concerning the origin of the Lottery which embodies, one may presume, the bitter feelings of the unlucky. It is related that, in that distant and marvellous epoch which is known as "Once upon a time," a humpback who had been very wicked (and what good was ever to be expected from a humpback?) was condemned to have his head cut off for his sins. He had rebelled against the sentence in vain, and the hour of execution drew near. Already the guards had surrounded him, and the captain had drawn his sword. Then the dwarf had a sudden inspiration, and begged so earnestly to be taken once more before the king that the guards consented. At the foot of the throne the humpback prostrated himself, and declared that he had made a discovery which would be as precious to rulers as pernicious to the ruled. He would state it in exchange for his life. The prospect thus opened before the king was more than any monarch, in those days, could be expected to resist. The trembling dwarf—commanded to speak and quickly—proceeded to explain in detail the scheme of the Lottery. Its advantages were not long in penetrating to the royal mind. The courtiers also approved, for each hoped to be fortunate. The humpback was graciously pardoned, was loaded with favours, and was accorded the privilege of cutting off with his own hand the heads of all the people condemned thenceforth to death in the kingdom.

AN ADVENTURE IN THE MARAIS.

AT the time of which I write I had just been made a partner in our house of business. Until this period I had been much confined to the counting-house, and it was now considered desirable that I should travel for a few months, in order to make the acquaintance of our principal customers, many of whom were French. In those days railways were unknown, and the diligences slow and uncertain modes of conveyance. I therefore travelled on horseback, accompanied by my trusty dog, Lion.

Lion was my faithful companion for many years, and once did me good service, as you shall hear. On one occasion, being bound for Noirmontiers, my road led through that part of La Vendée known as the "Marais." It was then literally a marshy tract of country, thinly populated by an almost amphibious race. The swampy ground was intersected by numerous canals that frequently served as roadways. Through these the peasants traversed the district in flat-bottomed boats called "nioles," and always armed with a long pole, with which they cleared the quagmires or propelled their boats, according to need.

It was towards the close of the day, in the last week in October. The air felt chilly and damp. A mist hung over the lowlands, rendering objects invisible at a short distance. On one side of the road along which I was riding, a broad dyke flowed sluggishly, on the other stretched an extensive tract of heath and furze-covered ground, brown and desolate, though here and there a few blossoms still lingered amidst the dark prickly green.

I found it was vain to think of pushing on to the coast that night, and I hoped to come upon some village or farmhouse where I might find rest and refreshment for my tired horse and myself. I looked from side to side, endeavouring to pierce the mist, in search of some object that would guide me. At length, a little farther along the road, I perceived several cows standing at the border of the dyke, as if waiting; and on the opposite side I could faintly discern traces of culture.

"There must be a house hereabouts," I said to myself, and as the thought passed through my mind a punt came gliding over the dyke, impelled by a vigorous push from the pole of a sturdy peasant. The cows, lowing, advanced close to the edge of the dyke, evincing their readiness to be ferried across to their milking place. As the punt touched the bank the boatman stuck his pole in the earth, and threw a rope round a stump of alder, while the cows stepped on board. Slipping the rope again, he was about to push off without taking any notice of my approach, when I hailed him.

"My friend," I said, "can you direct me to a house where I may find a night's lodging?"

"No," the man replied in a surly tone. "There are not many houses hereabouts."

"But there is surely a farm over yonder," I returned, pointing with my whip in the direction of the fields.

"Maybe," the man answered. "But we don't take in strangers at our place."

Without another word, he pushed off to the opposite side of the dyke, where the cows landed, and set off leisurely homewards.

"Can you not direct me to some place of shelter, my good fellow?" I called out as the man tethered his boat.

He took no notice, but made fast his punt. Then, with a "kup, kup," to his cows, he walked away, and disappeared in the mist.

I confess the wish I sent after him was not a blessing. There was nothing for it, however, but to proceed: waiting in the road was evidently useless. I touched my jaded horse lightly with the whip, rousing him from his meditations, and whistling to Lion, I set forward on my way.

I could now only see a very few yards before me through the increasing gloom. To be belated in that dismal country was no pleasant prospect. The road was in many places quite unprotected from the dykes, and every mile that brought me nearer to the sea-coast rendered the country more dreary. Salt swamps began to alternate with sandy heath, and the road became little more than a causeway carried through a morass, where the slightest deviation from the beaten track might cause horse and rider to sink, with little prospect of rescue.

Now, however, I distinctly heard a footstep behind me on the road, and turning, I saw a man, who had started out of the swamp apparently, leaping-pole in hand. Lion growled; but at a word from me he came close up to my horse, though still uttering a low, dissatisfied snarl.

The man, as I could perceive in the fast-gathering dusk, was a sufficiently rough, disreputable figure to excite the suspicions of any dog accustomed to good society. His ragged shirt, open in front, displayed his brawny chest. His coarse frieze jacket was out at elbows. Thick-lipped and low-browed, with his hair hanging in matted locks under his broad-brimmed hat, his appearance was certainly the reverse of prepossessing. Nevertheless, such as he was, I hailed his advent as a godsend. Surely he could be induced, by promise of reward, to guide me to some habitation where I could pass the night.

When I made this proposal, with the offer of money for his trouble, I could see his eyes glitter under his shaggy brows. There was no village near, not even a farmhouse, he said in a rude patois: but if I would put up with such accommodation as he could give, he would take me to his own cottage near at hand.

I gratefully accepted his offer. Anything would be better than being lost in the morass, which might only too probably be the case as night closed in. The man took the horse by the bridle and led him on, Lion following close at my heel, still, by an occasional growl, protesting against the arrangement. After proceeding a few hundred yards my conductor turned off the main road to a causeway leading to the right through the swamp. By this time barely light enough remained to render discernible the sullen pools that lay here and there on each side; while, rising out of the marsh, patches of higher ground were visible as we passed along. These were apparently planted with osiers and alder trees, and loomed dark like little islets in the midst of the sea of mist that covered the fens. Towards one of these the man directed his way.

I heard a quacking of ducks as we traversed the pathway between the osiers, and at last we stopped before a cottage, or rather cabin, through a hole in the roof of which a wreath of turf smoke found its way. Adjoining, stood what appeared at first sight to be a mound of thick foliage, but which proved to be an outhouse. I afterwards found that it was constructed of wickerwork plastered over with mud; many of the willow twigs had taken root, and covered the erection with a canopy of green.

The horse having been relieved of saddle and bridle, and led into this primitive stable, where a few handfuls of hay and a drink of water had to serve him for supper, I followed my guide into the cottage, saddle-bags in hand. He at first made some objection to Lion's entrance, suggesting that he might remain in the stable, but to this I refused to listen. Lion was therefore admitted, though with a bad grace. I found the interior of the cottage low and smoke-stained. The one unglazed window was partially closed with a wooden shutter. A turf fire smouldered on a flat stone that served for hearth. At one end, in a corner, stood a rude pallet bed covered with sheepskins. Opposite was a heavy wooden press that looked as if, at some former day, it had known better quarters.

"You will have the place to yourself," said the man in a hoarse voice; "I am going out again. You'll want supper, I suppose."

I signified that such refreshment would certainly be desirable.

He opened the cupboard, and brought out a loaf of black bread, some eggs, and dried fish. These latter he proceeded to cook. He then produced a bottle of wine, and set on the table a plate and drinking-cup of a more respectable kind than might have been expected.

I drew out my purse, and placed a few coins in the man's hand.

"If you are going out let me pay you now, my good friend," I said. "I must start at daybreak, probably before you return."

For a moment I was startled by the greedy manner in which he eyed the money; but he merely expressed himself satisfied and pocketed the coin. Then taking down a lantern that hung from a

nail in the wall, he lighted it, and set off on his nocturnal errand, whatever that might be.

When, having finished my supper, and having given Lion his share, I had time for reflection, the sinister countenance of my host began to haunt me unpleasantly. However, he had provided me with a roof over my head, and that was something to be thankful for, in that foggy, dreary, isolated spot. I threw more turf on the fire, for the bit of candle that had been lighted when I began my supper burnt low, and I did not relish the idea of being left in the dark.

Before it failed me, I thought it advisable to take a survey of the premises. Besides the entrance door, there was another at the end of the room on one side of the press. Opening it I found it led into a sort of lean-to, partly filled with hay. I raised the candle and glanced round. The place seemed to be a receptacle for all sorts of odds and ends, some of which raised uncomfortable doubts, so out of keeping did they seem with the cottage and its inmate. The further I looked the more my suspicions became excited. I took a pole that stood against the wall and moved the hay. An irresistible feeling took possession of me that it had been thrown there for purposes of concealment; nor was I mistaken. The first object I turned up was a boot of Parisian make, and near to it I found a russia leather valise with a brass plate at one end, on which I made out the initials C. F.

A cold shiver ran through my frame. It was a situation that might well dismay the boldest. I could no longer question but that I had fallen into a nest of brigands. A very few months before a good deal of painful interest had been roused by the mysterious disappearance in this part of the country of a commercial traveller named Charles Favel; and the conviction forced itself on my mind that I had come upon the relics of this unfortunate man. It was scarcely probable that my host carried on his nefarious traffic without accomplices. In all probability he had then gone to acquaint the gang that a bird had been caught in the trap. How many might there be? I was alone, with only a dog for my companion. True, I had pistols in my saddle-bag, but of what avail would they be against a number of desperadoes.

For a moment I thought of saddling my horse and making my escape, but on cooler reflection such an attempt seemed to be only flying from uncertain to certain peril. If I had been in danger of losing my way in the dusk of evening, how could I hope to keep to the pathway in the dense darkness that had now closed round? I put away that idea, and determined, if attacked, to sell my life dearly at any rate.

"Forewarned, forearmed," I said to myself, as, returning to the principal room, I took down the pistols from my saddle-bag, and looked to the priming.

"If they make any attempt upon us they shall have a hot reception,

Lion my boy," I said, and Lion looked in my face and slowly wagged his tail, as much as to say, "Let come what will, we are ready."

I threw myself on the bed without undressing, and placed the pistols under the bolster. Lion stretched himself at my side. I had no intention of sleeping, you may be sure. I watched the fire for some time, but the fatigue of the day had overpowered me, and objects became dim and indistinct before my eyes. Once or twice I started as a noise caught my ear, but I soon convinced myself that it was only my horse stamping in the outhouse, or the ducks disturbed in their sleep. I struggled hard to keep on the alert, but the wearied senses refused their office; past and present began to be mixed up in inextricable confusion, and at last I suppose I fell asleep.

I must have slept for some hours, when I was suddenly roused to full consciousness by the report of a pistol, and a gurgling sound as of someone being strangled, and by the faint glimmer of the fire I saw a man stealing towards the bed, and the glitter of a knife he held in his hand.

To catch up my pistol and fire was the work of an instant. Fortunately, though my aim had necessarily been uncertain in the hurry and semi-darkness, the shot had taken effect, thoroughly disabling the ruffian, for the arm that held the knife dropped powerless by his side. He groaned and staggered back against the wall for a moment, then with a volley of curses he turned and fled through the open door.

Meanwhile I had sprung from the bed, and hastened to the assistance of Lion, who had pinned another of the brigands by the throat. The dog's instinct had proved right; as I had expected, it was the master of the cottage. He had ceased to struggle and was nearly at the last gasp. A discharged pistol lay close to where he had fallen; it must have gone off in the air when the dog flew upon him, thus rousing me. In my examination of the premises I had observed a coil of rope; with this I bound the miscreant's arms tightly, and then called Lion off, not a moment too soon. When the man recovered sufficiently to speak, he began to cry for mercy, but the only consolation he got from me was the assurance that I should by early morning give notice of what had occurred at the nearest prefecture, and that doubtless a couple of gens-d'armes would conduct him where he would be taken care of. After awhile he ceased to plead, and lay passive, only groaning with the pain of the injuries he had received from the dog's fangs.

I did not yet feel myself out of danger. It wanted some time to daybreak, and every moment I expected others of the gang might come to the rescue of their comrade. I reloaded my pistol, and at a sign Lion placed himself at the door on the watch. At length welcome streaks of light appeared in the east. It was not so misty as the evening before; the wind during the night had brought a heavy shower, and cleared the air. As soon as it became sufficiently light

to distinguish the pathway through the swamp, I saddled my horse, and, with a feeling of thankfulness at my escape, retraced my steps to the highroad, leaving my treacherous host bound on the floor of the cottage.

The sun rose as I cleared the morass, casting long shadows before me; and presently a faint blue line on the far horizon gave token that the bourne towards which I journeyed would soon be reached. In another hour I saw the little fishing village before me, the sea sparkling in the morning sun, and beyond, the island of Noirmontiers.

When I made my deposition, I gave a full and particular description of the cottage. It appeared that a gang of highwaymen had infested the district for some time, eluding the search of the police; no doubt was made but that the men who had attacked me formed part of the number.

When the gens-d'armes arrived they found the cottage empty; my host must have been liberated by his accomplices; but, once put on the track, the law soon had the wretches in its clutch. The ringleaders were executed, the others sent to the galleys. My host confessed. It had been his part to lie in wait for belated travellers and lure them to his cottage. My suspicions had been too well founded; poor Favel had been murdered, and the same fate had been intended for me. The ruffians, however, had not calculated upon the strength and courage of Lion. He it was who saved my life, and deserved the thanks of the inhabitants of the Marais, and all who travelled that way, for being the means of bringing a gang of desperadoes into the hands of justice.

TOO LATE.

I.

LONG years ago we stood beside
This garden alcove, where the tide
To-night has scarcely strength to speed
The ever-whirling water-weed,
And meeting thus, at this lone hour,
The dreams of youth resume their power.

II.

So fair adown the moonlit slopes,
Hot with the breath of heliotropes,
Yon giant cedar-branches made
Deep interchange of light and shade.
So fell the shadows far and nigh,
From herb and tree, in years gone by.

III.

The misty moon from heaven's floors,
Her widening glory brightly pours;
It ripples on the stream, and shines,
Paling the water-flags, and bines,
To make an arc of light and heat,
Where thou and I once more may meet.

IV.

I hear thy words—I see thy face,
I lean towards thy loved embrace,
Yet tremble not;—our star of love
Is safe, all earthly change above,
As free to come, as free to go,
As is the moonbeam's silvery flow.

V.

For O, the cross of Love I bear,
Is all undimm'd by earthly care;
Its sharpness in my heart, for thee,
Is all that now remains of me;
Remove it thence—by change perplext,
E'en Love itself may leave me next!

VI.

Dull as I'm grown, what fire intense
Constrains me into eloquence?
The words flow forth, as from a well
Of tenderness, unquenchable;
Unquench'd by tears, because the end
Has come—we part to-night, my friend.

VII.

"We part?" Ah yes! I would not twine
One tendril of Love's flower divine
Round ruined pillars, or amid
An alien home—kind Heaven forbid!
That large-eyed vision of a child,
For earth too fair, for heaven too wild—

VIII.

I would not have it break its wings
In contact with earth's common things,
I would not have it tamed and bent
To dull monotonous content,
Or let one thought of age, or death,
Curdle its blood, or chill its breath.

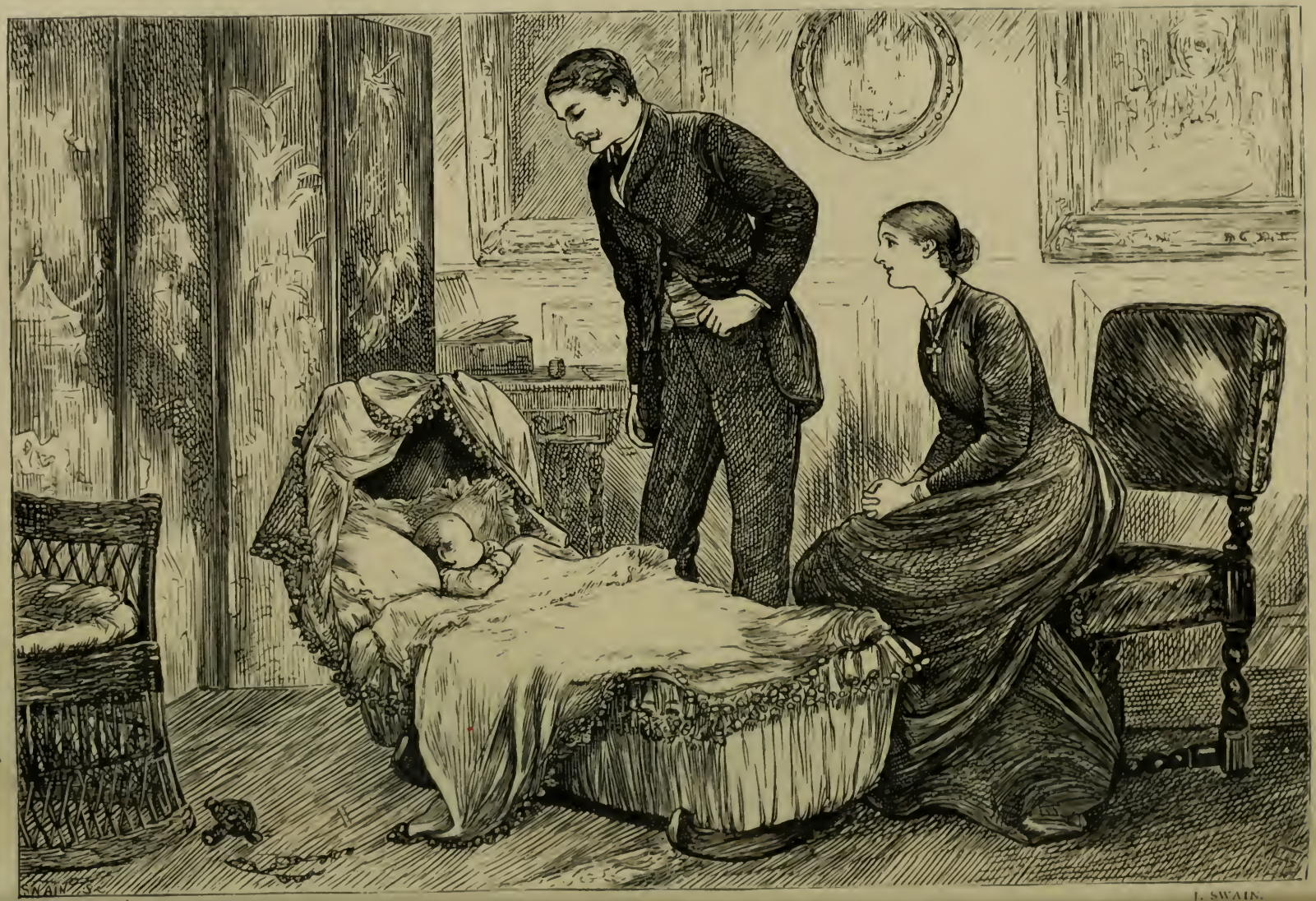
IX.

Dear friend, farewell! the moon's full blaze
Declines beneath yon cloudy haze;
Our little arc of light and heat
Has passed away, beneath our feet,
And all Love's fairy-land of bliss
Upgathered in yon black abyss.

X.

So pass fair hopes and fond desires,
So hide in Heaven your seraph fires!
While far beyond the night of sense,
By Love's supreme intelligence,
I dimly feel youth's early bond,
All change of life or death beyond:
And question still yon darkened sky,
If light can fail, or Love can die.

C. M. GEMMER.



J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TROUBLE AND TERROR.

STRANGE commotion was in the Abbey of Pomeroy. A young child was dying. Children die every day, are mourned and forgotten: but the circumstances attending this child's anticipated death were deemed to be strange. It was the third infant of Lady Anna Pomeroy's that had thus been prematurely cut off, and all unexpectedly. The other two had been girls; this was a boy, little Hugh, and valued accordingly: a strong, beautiful child, a few months old. Some slight ailment, common to infancy, had attacked him a week ago; he was thought to be recovering; all day long he had seemed as well as possible; and now, when evening had set in, he was seized suddenly with convulsions. Precisely had it been so with the two former children, now mouldering away in the Pomeroy vaults: would this child follow them?

So well, so well had he seemed this very morning: almost convalescent. Leolin Pomeroy had stood over its cradle laughing and talking, as he discussed with his wife some joyful news. The dream of his later life—the hope of dispossessing the young Lord of Pomeroy, to reign, himself, in his stead—appeared to be close upon fruition. That for which Leolin had been working for years in semi-secrecy: now all but grasping success, now falling into despair at the many crosses and delays that perpetually threw him back: had never looked so bright, so certain, as now. For a messenger had travelled direct to Pomeroy from the Court of Rome, bringing glad tidings to Leolin.

He needed them. He needed that some ray of sunshine should temper the gloom and horror in which the abbey was steeped. For that atmosphere of superstition, which had for some two months reigned within it, for it was now December, had not cleared itself one whit. Guy, Lord of Pomeroy, so long dead, haunted it, and would be seen at times by the affrighted inhabitants.

Even Leolin did not quite know what to make of it. While ridiculing the prevailing fears which he never ceased to call foolish, he had, himself, seen the apparition; and Guy's was a face that could not be mistaken. Mrs. Pomeroy was growing absolutely ill with the dread. Joan passed her days in a continuous shiver. The Lady of Pomeroy maintained, as ever, her assertion that they were all mistaken, shook her head in kindly ridicule at their fears, kept plenty of lights burning in the abbey, and was never tired of going about it with her cheering presence and words. Major Barkley, the close friend of her late husband, still remained on his visit to her: Leolin haughtily wondered what he wanted there, and whether he meant to stay for ever.

This brings us to the last day of the child's life. It was the first day of the week—Monday. Another week set in of miserable discomfort, of ghostly fears! another week of intolerable suspense to Leolin, as to whether his cherished scheme would prosper eventually, or perish. One and twenty days to-day since a word, good or bad, had reached him from Rome. Leolin took his breakfast in moody silence. The star of Pomeroy did not seem to be in the ascendant.

But, how one short hour may change things! Barely had Leolin quitted the breakfast-room for the library, when—with all the state and ceremony observed on important occasions at Pomeroy—a messenger direct from Rome was shown in: an Italian gentleman, charged to confer with Leolin.

The conference lasted two hours and a half. And then Leolin, snatching a moment while refreshments were being served, made his way to his wife, his mien radiant, his manner genial as it used to be before these troubles of later years set in. Anna—who was well of the fever but not yet strong—stood over her baby, as he lay in his cradle, laughing and crowing.

"If he keeps as well as this, he shall go out to-morrow, Christine," she observed joyfully to the nurse. "The weather is still mild." But at this moment Leolin walked in, and motioned the nurse away.

"At last, Anna!" he exclaimed. "I shall soon once more hail you as Lady of Pomeroy."

"Have they dissolved the marriage, then?" returned Anna, in a quiet voice, as if the news were a matter of indifference to her.

"No: and I am not sure that they will dissolve it. Signor Gallino has come here all the way from Rome to confer with me. Gallino says the marriage will have to stand good, once and for all. But the Vatican will refuse to recognise any as Lord Pomeroy save my

brother Rupert, the poor wanderer; and it will recognise me as lord during Rupert's absence."

"Has the Court of Rome pronounced this?"

"It is on the eve of doing it."

"But—the English law?" debated Anna, that important point striking her at once. "If Sybilla should refuse to yield obedience to this—should call the law to her aid?"

"And would she dare to do it, do you imagine?—dare to oppose any decree pronounced by Rome? You must know she would not, Anna. Whatever may be Sybilla's shortcomings in other respects, she is faithful and obedient to her church. Rupert can never return; openly, at least; so I reign for life."

"Leolin, darling, it is not just; do not think of it: the young lord is the heir, failing Rupert; let him reign. How can we be happier than we are?" added Anna, looking up with a smile. "The baby is almost well: what more need we care for?"

Leolin Pomeroy bent over the cradle, and dropped the subject. He had long known how useless it was to impress his own notions on his wife. The baby smiled at him, and closed its little fist round the forefinger Leolin placed within it. "You young Turk! you'd like to keep me a prisoner, would you? He will be quite well in a day or two, Anna."

"Oh, quite. Leolin," she continued, in an impassioned whisper, "I think if this child had followed the other two I should almost have died."

Leolin brought his face up from his boy's and bent it on his wife's. "Forget his danger, Anna love, he is well again: and therefore the more reason exists for my assuming my right. Our child must succeed me in it."

Anna shook her head. "There may be logic in what you say, Leolin, but there certainly is not reason. Your brother Rupert is older than you are; and his life, I should fancy, is not likely to be much prolonged—think what it must be for him! At his death the young lord must be Lord of Pomeroy without dispute."

"We don't know that," said Leolin, significantly. "Let me once get into power here—it will be strange if I cannot make things turn out as I will. Will you come in to luncheon and see Gallino?"

"I think not, Leolin. I do not know him: and I hardly care to leave baby."

Leolin went back to his guest. And, when the hasty meal was over, drove him to Owlstone to catch a London train. Signor Gallino had come charged with other missions as well as that to Leolin.

Leolin returned home just in time to dress for dinner. In the drawing-room he found his wife, standing over the large fire. Her face was a subdued face this evening; it was generally so now; her eyes carried with them a faint suspicion of recent tears. Leolin

could not but notice this demeanour: it contrasted so strongly with his own joyous mood.

"You look as dull as your gown, Anna—alluding to the black silk she had on; and since her illness she had not yet ventured on dresses made evening fashion. "What's amiss? Baby's not worse is he?"

"Nothing is amiss, Leolin; nothing," she gently answered, slipping her hand into his; "and baby has been quite well all day and as bright as gold. I don't feel strong myself, that is all; and I began thinking, as I sat alone between the lights, that—perhaps—I never should be strong again. And so ——"

"And so you made a goose of yourself," put in Leolin, drawing her to him. "But you know you have promised me, times and again, not to indulge these low spirits, Anna."

"I cannot always help it," she sighed. "And, what with one thing and another, the abbey, as you know, is very dreary just now."

"I wish I could take you out of it!" he impulsively exclaimed. "I would, but for one thing."

"What is that thing?"

"That I cannot well absent myself from it."

"Dinner, my lady," announced one of the servants, throwing wide the door.

Leolin took his wife's hand, led her in, and they sat down to table. He was gay and talkative. His mood this evening was really a joyous one; moreover he generally deemed it well to show himself so before his depressed and timorous servants. The last course was on the table, when Christine, the nurse, came swiftly into the room without any ceremony whatever, her eyes wild. The baby was in convulsions.

With a stifled cry, Anna flew to the chamber. Leolin followed. It was too true. The child's life was ebbing fast.

Oh, then was confusion. One attendant ran hither, another thither; Mr. Norris came upon the wings of the wind, Father Andrew was sent for. Leolin drew his weeping wife away from the scene to a quieter chamber; he essayed to speak a few soothing words. Hardly listening to their import, Anna lifted her white face to her husband from the crimson velvet chair where he had seated her. Her countenance was full of deep meaning, of dread; she spoke in a whisper and shivered as she sat. A fear crossed him that the ague was coming back.

"There is some strange fate upon us, Leolin, and you provoke it. Three times have you been on the point, or seemed to be, of dispossessing that little boy, Sybilla's child, and each time our child's life has paid for it. When the news first came, three years ago, that Rome would aid you to dispossess the young lord, our baby sickened, and died ere the day was over. She had been very well till then. Again, when news came the second time that Rome would certainly aid you to dispossess the boy, our second baby died. Now you have

had tidings to-day to the same effect, and this, our last darling, is dying. And yet—Leolin!—you are not a whit nearer your ambition than you were, for the young lord is the lord still."

Sheer surprise had kept Leolin silent. Was his wife losing her wits?—had the trouble scared them away? He did not feel sure it was not so. "I am astonished at you, Anna! At any other moment I should reprove you. They have been mere common coincidences, such as occur in everybody's life. Put away fancies so ridiculous, my dearest."

"I wish I could put away my baby's danger," she returned, in a wailing tone. "Oh, Leolin! I tell you I think I shall go with him, if he is to die. Heaven is displeased; it is assuredly working against us. No, don't keep me; pray don't keep me! Let me see the last of him!"

What could Leolin do in answer to this piteous appeal but let her return to the sick chamber? He looked in at the door himself, but that was all. Men do not like such scenes; and, what with doctor and servants, there was no room for him. He was ardently attached to the child, and he felt that he would almost give his own life to save that frail one flitting away. Putting on his hat, he went down to the cloisters, encountering that noble-looking boy, Rupert, at his own door. This young lord of Pomeroy was Leolin's bête noire at all times; his sight at this moment brought the reproach, just spoken by Lady Anna, home to him with a strengthened sting.

"Will you tell me how the baby is, Uncle Leolin?" he began. "They have brought tidings to mamma that it is worse; and she bade me run and see."

Leolin pushed by without answering: and then saw Mary, who had followed Rupert.

"What do *you* do here, Mary?" demanded Leolin. The children were both in drawing-room dress of velvet, Rupert's purple, Mary's black; they were spending the evening with the Lady of Pomeroy.

"I came with Rupert."

"How is it you are not at school? Running about the abbey ——"

"Don't you know I am at home for the holidays?" interrupted Mary. "Mamma would have sent me back this morning as usual, but I said no: the holidays would begin in a few days and I should not go back. And I shall not ask your leave, Uncle Leolin, to go where I please in the abbey. I shall ask Rupert's. He is its lord. It is a good thing for you that I was not a boy."

Leolin constrained himself, feeling how worse than absurd it was to betray his bitter mood to these children: how beneath his dignity it would be to resent Mary Pomeroy's words.

"It is a very good thing," she repeated. "Had I been a boy I should have been the lord in spite of all; in spite of you, Uncle Leolin: and you don't think, I hope, you would have been allowed to

treat me as you treat Rupert. The abbey laughs at you, behind your back."

"Curb your silly tongue, young lady."

"It does. Everybody in it—except, perhaps, Lady Anna; and she would laugh, if she were not your wife. Mamma laughs at you, and the lady must laugh at you; and the servants laugh at you; I know it just as well as though I heard them. It *is* foolish of you, Uncle Leolin, to be always cross with Rupert."

With an imperative gesture Leolin Pomeroy motioned the children towards their own domains. The young lord walked away courteously, but Mary went with a defiant step and her head held high.

"If you are so rude, Mary, you shall never be the abbey's lady," spoke Rupert, reprovingly. "You ought not to speak so to Uncle Leolin. If people are not civil to us there's the more reason, mamma says, for our being civil to them, if only to show them that we know good manners. A true Lord of Pomeroy, she says, is always courteous."

"I shall be the lady," returned Miss Mary, paying attention to the first part of his sentence only—"you know I shall be, and you have promised it. And I shall rule the abbey when I grow up, and everybody in it, except you, Rupert."

"But is that any reason why you should be rude to Uncle Leolin?" debated Rupert. "Mamma says poor Uncle Leolin has had a great cross to bear, and that we ought to be all the kinder to him because of it. And the two little babies died, you know; and now this one is perhaps going to die! And I'm sure I'd like Uncle Leolin to be the lord, as he wishes it so much."

"Do you know what your French nurse says—that you'd give away the abbey if you could, and your head after it," retorted Mary. "You know she says it. I'd wish some good sense for myself, if I were you, instead of wishing that Uncle Leolin was Lord of Pomeroy. A fine dance he would lead us!—he would tell Father Andrew to put us every day en penitence."

"My goodness! so it's here you are, Miss Mary!" interrupted Bridget in her quickest tones, as she swooped down upon the children, attired in her bonnet and cloak. "Here's the lady asking what's become of you, and Mademoiselle looking for you in one place and sending me in another! I've got leave to spend an hour with Tooms's wife, and I want to be gone!"

Leolin Pomeroy was slowly pacing the cloisters, his heart full of resentment and of bitterness. Resentment against what, or whom? He could not have told. It was an indisputable fact, that each of the times which had seemed to bring his ambitious dreams especially near their fulfilment had witnessed the death of one of his children: his elder child first, then the second. And now, when for the third time the like prospect of speedy realization was brought close to him, the third child was smitten. Was an ill fate pursuing him? Leolin,

catching up a thread of his wife's superstition, asked himself the question.

It was a cold night, very bright, the stars and the moon shining. The mildness of the day had given place to a sharp frost—and it was always cold in those windy cloisters. Leolin wore no overcoat over his dinner dress: his inward fever of thought kept his blood warm. Another matter, which had troubled him lately, lay sharply on his mind to-night: and that was his wife's health. That she was weak in body, sorrowful in spirit, he could not fail to see. Her father's words, repeated to him in London by Lady Essington, lay on his conscience more than he would have cared to tell: "It is the distress of mind that worries Anna and makes her ill, and if you do not take care you will lose her." And the worry arose from his scheming about this selfsame chiefdom of Pomeroy. If he lost his wife—and what effect this last child's death might have upon her, he shrank from contemplating—why then the world to him would be worthless.

"Leolin!"

So lost was he in these unwelcome thoughts, that he half started at the call. His sister had approached him, her dark face stern in its distress.

"Leolin, what is it that is amiss with the child?"

"Convulsions," was the short reply. "He is dying."

"Dying! Is there no hope?" continued Joan, after a pause.

"I am sure there is none. I gathered it from Norris's face, and from a word he said to me."

"Alas, poor child! Poor Anna! The third infant: all so healthy and lovely, and yet—you cannot keep them!"

She had turned to pace the cloisters with him and they walked side by side in silence. Presently Joan spoke again, in a low tone.

"Why do you bring it upon yourself, Leolin?"

"*Bring it upon myself!*" echoed Leolin, insipient defiance in his tone. "Bring what?"

Joan laid her hand upon his arm soothingly, its very clasp bespeaking peace.

"You bring it upon yourself," she calmly repeated. "And, as it seems to me, things have now come to a pass when it would be worse than folly if we made pretence to shut our eyes to it. This plotting of yours, underlying all your hopes and actions, this perpetual working and striving to deprive Sybilla's child of his rights—why do you persist in it?"

"Because he is Sybilla's child," was the answer.

"He is George's. And George was the Lord of Pomeroy. You cannot prevail against fate, Leolin: but fate can prevail against you. Have you forgotten the scene of Gaunt's death-bed?"

No answer.

"It is known abroad, Leolin. I speak of Gaunt's words. They might have proved to you either a blessing or a curse, as you took them up: hitherto you have made them the latter ——"

"Joan!"

"Well, I will say, provoked it. '*As you deal by this child, so may you be prosperous in your own children.*' They were Gaunt's words to you, Leolin. And how have you dealt by the child? and how have you prospered in your own children? Be wise in time: do away with your animosity and your plots against Rupert, and then perhaps you may be happy in children of your own."

"We are called a superstitious race, I know," sarcastically rejoined Leolin, "but I have yet to learn that importance can be attached to the prejudiced ravings of a dying man."

"What did Gaunt himself tell you?" quickly returned Joan—"to take heed how you despised the warning of a dying man. Leolin, there are things in earth that we cannot explain or account for; the solution of which we may not dream of in our limited philosophy. Why is it that the words of one, dying to this world, are so often found to be warnings, true as if they came from heaven?—and that such has been the case, you cannot deny. Is it that, at that moment, the spirit has caught a portion of the divine knowledge it is hastening to, and can discern the future? I know not: you know not: but we both do know that these death admonitions are sometimes strangely worked out: we both know that Gaunt's warning to you has so been."

"You are dreaming, yourself, Joan."

"A good thing if we had all been dreaming of late years," was the reply. "You received fresh news from Rome this morning. Was it good?"

"Very good. The new cardinal is for me. They will not annul the marriage; that question is set at rest. But they will recognise Rupert the wanderer as the lord, and me as his sole representative."

"What end will that answer?" mournfully asked Joan. "Rupert will not live for ever; he cannot; and then the boy is Lord of Pomeroy again: the true, reigning lord, to be dispossessed by none."

"That time may be far off, further than your life or mine, for we may never hear of Rupert's death. And until we do hear of it, I shall be Lord of Pomeroy."

"You never will be, then, Leolin. I tell you that you cannot act against fate. I see not how you will be prevented, but you will be; ay, in spite of what Rome may say or do; for fate has been working against you ever since Gaunt's death. Oh, Leolin, are the eyes of your understanding closed that you cannot see it all? Often does my heart sink within me when I see how surely and cruelly the prediction is fulfilling itself."

"Joan, you were born a few centuries too late; you should have lived when astrologers and witches flourished."

"'When Pomeroy's heir goes forth a bride to win,
And Pomeroy's heir goes forth in vain;
When Pomeroy's lord by a lie doth gain,
Then woe to the Pomeroys twain and twain.'"

Quite solemnly did Joan recite the lines aloud: that *she* put faith in them was very evident. Leolin's face was immovable.

"That poor Guy did win Alice by a lie, is too true, I fear," continued Joan. "And what has the result been?—what sad fate has it brought upon you all; you four brothers! But for the resentment that took possession of her when she discovered the fraud, even Alice, unstable in principle though she was, would not have acted as she did: for I have learnt to believe that it was chiefly to spite Guy she allowed herself to meet Rupert. What has followed? Guy was murdered; Rupert is an exile; George is dead; and you —you are an unhappy and troubled man, Leolin. It has, indeed, been woe to you all, twain and twain."

"I cannot see what good it does to recal these things—or to discuss them."

Leolin's tone was hard; made so, perhaps, to his pain. Joan's good feeling resented it. She had always been inclined to be dictatorial to her younger brothers.

"You must take your own course, Leolin. But your line of conduct does not tend to bring you honour."

"What conduct?"

"To the boy. You often insult him; and the account of it is whispered throughout the abbey."

"So he carries tales away, does he?"

"No. But Mary does. You know what she is."

"I know that she has an insolent spirit, and that it ought to be taken out of her——for her own sake."

"She has Guy's spirit: but Mary has her good points. Mrs. Pomeroy has not repressed her will, as she ought to have done, and now it has the mastery. Mary is a truthful child and the soul of honour."

"And is allowed to insult her elders with impunity. I——Joan! what is the matter?"

They were in front of the west tower. Joan had halted, and stood gazing upwards as if turned to stone. She clasped Leolin, and pointed to the window of the haunted room, the glass in which had never been repaired. "Leolin—see!—there!"

Glaring down upon them with its ghastly face, Guy's face, was the figure that had lately been frightening the inmates of the abbey to sickness, almost to death. Never had it looked more shadowy, more ghastly, than it looked now.

Joan hid her head, and trembled. The figure vanished. And, before a word had been spoken by either brother or sister, Mrs. Pomeroy came swiftly up.

"Leolin, I can no longer bear it," she sobbed forth, every pulse within her quivering with horror. "It is killing me. Something must be done; something devised. Theresa said you and Joan were walking here, so I came to you."

"Devised?" repeated Leolin.

"I would rather die than bear the life I am leading. It is in that room now—Guy. It has a dreadful look of reproach in its face."

"A reproach that tells home to her," thought Leolin, though he felt full of compassion for her distress. "Why do you sit where you can see the west rooms, Mrs. Pomeroy?"

"I must so sit. I must. Some power that I cannot resist fascinates me to it. Let me be where I will—at Lady Anna's, at Sybilla's, out in the grounds, away in the village, praying in the chapel—as soon as dusk creeps on I feel compelled to go where I can see the haunted rooms. It is as if a spell drew me: I cannot resist it: and there I sit and watch—and watch—and shiver until the apparition shows itself, when I scream aloud for help, or I faint away. If it does not come I am ill with expectancy, and watch through the live-long night, feverishly yearning for what I dread to see. It is killing me."

"You should leave the abbey for a time," said Leolin, deep pity in his tone.

"It would follow me."

"Indeed I know not what remedy can be devised, save that of quitting the abbey. Your mother ——"

Leolin's voice died away. Christine was approaching them, her countenance mournful, her step heavy.

"She brings news of your child, Leolin," whispered Joan.

"Well?" cried Leolin, turning to the woman, a pang seizing on his heart.

"It is all over, sir. And my lady is senseless."

Yes, the little child was dead. And the first thing to be done, as a preliminary to other forms and ceremonies, was to hoist the death flag over the abbey gateway: the large melancholy flag, its white ground and black devices looking like nothing so much as a skull and cross-bones.

The flag was at the Keep: to keep it in the abbey would have been a violation of the old Pomeroy customs: consequently as soon after the child was gone as the abbey could collect itself—which certainly was not very speedily, Jeffs and Markham, two of the elder servants, started to fetch the flag. They left the abbey together. On their way, in turning down the grassy hollow near the Keep, they encountered a woman speeding along. No other than Bridget.

"Thee'rt back soon," cried Jeffs, who was fond of adopting this familiar mode of speech.

"Ay," answered Bridget. "Tooms' is off to Owlstone, of all nights in the year; so, there being nobody to walk home with me, I thought the sooner I came back the better. One doesn't care to be about here at night, all by oneself, you know. Where are you two going?"

"To fetch the death-flag. The young child's gone."

Bridget pushed back her bonnet. "I was afraid it would be so. I couldn't get him out of my head, poor little soul, and I felt as restless as could be. Lady Anna seems to have no luck with her children."

"The lord has been seen again to night," continued Jeffs, solemnly crossing himself.

Bridget's voice dropped. "No!"

"It's true," said Jeffs. "He appeared at the tower window, ghostlier than ever: it's said that Mr. Leolin and Miss Joan both saw him there. Anyway, they were in the cloisters at the time."

"He was here to night," whispered Markham; "here, in this very hollow, not many minutes ago. Brill saw him and came rushing into the abbey without any sense left."

Bridget gave a shudder. Not daring to go on alone now, she turned back with the two men, walking between them. All in a minute, some person or thing was indistinctly seen swiftly passing along at a short distance. They took it for the ghost. Bridget caught hold of her companions with an awful shriek; the men's hair rose up on end.

How they dragged Bridget to the Keep, and how they got to it themselves, and thundered at its door till Jerome came, was best known to themselves. Bridget made a butt at old Jerome, seizing him by the legs, which all but threw the old man over.

"The saints be good to us!" she shrieked. "There's the dead lord in the hollow."

"I saw it with my own eyes this blessed night," wailed Jerome. "What have you all come here for?"

"The death-flag," answered Jeffs. "Lady Anna's child's gone."

The old man lifted his hands. "How many more of the Pomeroys are to go, ere death shall be satisfied?"

"One more," whispered Bridget; "Mr. Rupert: and then the poor wandering spirit will be laid to rest. I have said it from the first."

They were going home, the two men bearing between them the furled flag, for it was large and heavy, and Bridget catching hold of both of them and walking with her head ducked down, when a most extraordinary incident occurred. Walking towards them in the cold winter's night, in her evening dress of black velvet, with its rich white lace, her hair bare, no covering on her neck and arms, came Mary Pomeroy. Bridget, who had lifted her eyes at the footsteps, shrieked out again.

"They are saying in the abbey that papa is walking here to-night," said the young lady, as they stopped in their astonishment. "I have never seen him. I want to see what he is like."

"She is off her head!" ejaculated Bridget, in a half-whisper.

"You are off your head yourself for saying it," retorted Miss Mary. "Is it so strange I should want to see papa, with all this commotion about him in the abbey? Brill came in just now, and said he had met the lord in the hollow; they had to give him some brandy, for he was prostrate with fright. And I have come out to see him. I will see him if he is to be seen."

"And you have no fear?" uttered Bridget, aghast.

"Fear!" returned Mary. "No. I possess the Pomeroy spirit, but not the Pomeroy superstition."

"You will catch your death, Miss Mary," returned Bridget again, while the two men stood uncovered in the child's presence. "Could you have put nothing on, if you must have come?"

"Of course I could not: had they known I was coming, they would have stopped me. Have you seen anything of papa?"

"What has come over her?" Bridget whispered to Jeffs: "it's against human nature to be so devoid of fear. We shall see nothing Miss Mary," she added, aloud; "a looked-for ghost never comes."

As if to confute the woman's words, a sound, as of garments rustling, was heard, and a shadowy figure passed them. Its dull eyes were strained on the child, and the child's were strained on it—the spirit of her father. Mary Pomeroy, brave though she had professed herself to be, gave forth a cry, as she looked after it gliding away in the moonlight. Bridget fell on her knees: the men, appalled, dropped the flag. And, to increase the solemnity of the scene, the death-bell tolled out at that moment from the abbey chapel, for the soul of the infant, just departed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN THE KEEP.

The Lady of Pomeroy sat in her drawing-room, when a servant entered and said that Jerome had come up from the Keep and craved speech of her. Nearly a fortnight had elapsed since the burial of the infant, but Lady Anna Pomeroy's life had since then hung upon a thread: she was beginning now to recover, at which all in the abbey rejoiced. There was another fact at which perhaps they rejoiced more—the ghost had not been seen during these two weeks.

Jerome came in, his white hair flowing on his shoulders. Of late years he had acquired a sad look of care. "I would speak with the lady alone," he said, bending his head to Sybilla with reverence. And the servants shut the door.

"Madam," said Jerome, drawing near, "the closing scene is certainly at hand."

"You think so, Jerome?"

"Nay, it is no thought: it is all too sure."

"Major Barkley has feared the end was near. I will come at once, Jerome. And bring—whom?"

"None at present but Mr. Leolin. The lord asked, madam, but for you and for him."

"Jerome, you have had a trying time. If it be in my power to recompense your fidelity in any way ——"

"The lady is very kind," interrupted Jerome. "I have seen the Pomeroys dwindle away, one after another; the old lord first, and then his sons, all now are gone save Mr. Leolin: nothing is left for old Jerome but to hope soon to go after them."

"Nay, but I trust you will live many years, Jerome. These dark days will pass away, and there may be comfort in store for you yet. You would be faithful to my child."

"Faithful to your child, madam! Ay, that would I. Is he not a Pomeroy? and was not his sire, Mr. George, with his loving heart and merry spirit, dearer to me than some of the rest were?"

Jerome backed out as he spoke, and Sybilla hastened to attire herself.

Leolin Pomeroy was in his wife's chamber. She lay on a sofa by the fire, well covered up; Leolin sat in front of the sofa, looking at her. How dear his wife was to him, this last illness, when he went near to losing her, had shown; and if thankfulness had never pervaded his heart before, it filled its every crevice now. Decidedly Leolin was not having a good time, as the children say. In addition to the discomfort pervading the abbey, to the recent loss of his child, to the peril of his wife—in addition to all this, he was no nearer becoming the Lord of Pomeroy than he had been. Rather further off, in fact. For, within a day or two ill news had come to him from his old and firm friend the cardinal, to the effect that the hopes lately given to Leolin had again faded, as all previous hopes had faded, however near their realization they might have appeared to be, and his eminence began to think the matter would have to be given up.

Anna opened her eyes. "I did not know you were here, Leolin," —holding out her hand. "Have you been here long?"

"Not very long, love," he answered, imprisoning the attenuated fingers between his own warm ones. "I think you look a little better, Anna—don't you feel so?" he added, anxiously.

Anna sighed. She felt her recovery was yet doubtful, in spite of Leolin's sanguine belief.

"When the cold winter has passed, I shall take you to a more genial climate," he resumed. "To the south of France, or to Italy—some one of those happy places."

"Oh, Leolin, if you would but go there for good!" she impulsively

spoke, tears of possible hope rising to her dim eyes. "And leave this dreary abbey to itself, and forget your scheming, and let the little lord be at peace!"

"I know you have not liked the scheming—as you call it," he rejoined. "And your father has liked it less. He has gone the length of saying that it worried you into that intermittent fever last autumn."

"Leolin," she gasped, her restless fingers nervously entwining themselves with his, "I think I will speak now—if I ever am to speak—and say what that scheming is to me. I think—I fear—that you will have to choose between it and me. It has taken such a sad hold upon me, it so distresses me and terrifies me, that I cannot get well. By day it saddens me, by night it torments me; and—and—I seem to see that it will in the end be too much for me; that—I—shall not *live*."

"You think," answered Leolin, in a dreamy kind of way, "that I shall have to choose between it and you. That, if I am to keep you, I must abandon that."

"I cannot help it," she said, the tears beginning to trickle slowly down her cheeks.

"Suppose I say that I will give it up? That my wife is dearer to me than even ambition?"

In her long-tried mind she thought this was too good to be real, and only kept the restless fingers still a moment that they might press his the closer. Leolin knelt down; he put his arm around her, his face very near her face.

"I promise it you," he softly whispered. "It seems, as some of you have told me, that I cannot make war with fate—and *that* appears to have arrayed itself against me for good and all. Henceforth, Anna, the strife shall cease: George's child shall be at peace, for me."

A faint joyous cry, and Anna Pomeroy feebly drew his face down to hers.

A few minutes, and she seemed to have fallen into a tranquil sleep. Leolin stood by the fire, thinking of the promise he had just made, regretting it perhaps in his inmost heart, or, rather, its necessity, but certainly never intending to retract it. A servant appeared.

"The Lady of Pomeroy is here, sir. She wishes to see you."

"The Lady of Pomeroy! Here?"

"Yes, sir. She waits in the red-room."

Visits from the lady to him were so rare that Leolin could only feel surprise. He found Sybilla was attired for walking.

"I have had a summons to the Keep, Leolin," she began, "and am come to ask you to accompany me. It is urgent."

"A summons to old Jerome?" he returned, half sarcastically.

"Jerome brought it me. One is lying there, at the point of death, who would see both you and me."

Leolin felt somewhat staggered. "Lying at the Keep!" he exclaimed. "Who is lying there?" And Sybilla dropped her voice to a whisper.

"The Lord of Pomeroy."

Leolin did not comprehend. He stared at her in amazement and confusion. Her countenance was sad, her manner solemn.

"He who has been an exile and a wanderer for these nine years, Leolin; my brother-in-law and your brother. He is come back again, the true and only Lord of Pomeroy, and he is under Jerome's care at the Keep—dying."

Leolin, waiting to take in mentally the facts, drew a deep breath. "Then we were not mistaken—we knew that Rupert was here, but I thought he must have gone again. Oh, how imprudent!—how can he have managed to escape detection?"

Three parts dazed, Leolin caught up his hat and walked with Sybilla to the Keep in the approaching twilight of the winter afternoon. Joan had gone to the convent for the day, but would be home later. In passing along the hollow ground, Leolin turned his head from side to side, looking perhaps for the apparition that had a trick of showing itself there. Sybilla so interpreted it.

"Ah, Leolin, it is not here to-night. It will soon be laid to rest."

"With Rupert's death. That is what some of them have said, I hear. When did Rupert come?—how long ago is it now?"

"Speak of him as the lord, Leolin. I told you, years ago, that none else had any legal right to the title." And Leolin shrugged his shoulders.

Jerome awaited them at the Keep. Leading the way upstairs, he held the door of a chamber open for them to pass in. Leolin approached the bed: and, very much to his surprise, Major Barkley rose from a chair by its side and quitted the room. The windows were but narrow slits set in the deep wall, the daylight, besides, was growing dim, so that Leolin had to bend over the bed to discern the features of him who lay upon it.

"Rupert," he gently said, for one cannot speak angrily to a dying man, "Rupert ——"

With a cry that sounded too wild in its terror of astonishment for any human cry, Leolin started back. He saw not the handsome Rupert lying there; but the white face, the already half-dulled eyes, and the imperfect, never-to-be-forgotten lips of Guy, Lord of Pomeroy.

Sybilla laid her gently-detaining hand on Leolin to reassure him. "It is indeed Guy," she whispered. "Guy himself; not Rupert."

Utterly confounded, startled, Leolin sank down on the chair from which Major Barkley had risen. In a moment such as this even a strong man cannot at once collect himself. He was doubting whether he was in a dream: he was doubting what was true around him, what false: he was doubting whether that, on the bed, was Guy in

the spirit, or Rupert in the body with the semblance of Guy's face. In short, he knew not what *was*, what was not. Guy slowly turned on the pillow, and spoke—and the voice was Guy's, not Rupert's.

"Leolin, my brother!" But Leolin did not answer.

"Leolin, you will recognise Guy as the true Lord of Pomeroy," spoke Sybilla, perhaps mistaking the motive of his silence. "Whatever may have happened, he is such as long as he lives."

"Oh yes, yes!" mechanically replied Leolin. "Who would dispute *Guy's* right?"

"Well, Leolin, he has never forfeited it. It was Rupert who was killed, not Guy."

"I cannot understand," uttered Leolin, certain contradictions presenting themselves to his bewildered mind.

"In that scuffle in the haunted room, the one killed was Rupert," she resumed. "It was supposed to be the lord, and he was buried as the lord; but it was really Rupert. The lord escaped."

"Yes, I escaped," put in Guy, holding out to Leolin his feeble hand. "And I have since been a wanderer and an exile."

"I seem—to be all at sea," cried Leolin, affectionately clasping the hand between his strong palms, as he had but just now clasped his wife's. "*Rupert* killed!—and not yourself! Then why, Guy, did you go away?"

"Ah, it was a mistake," answered Guy, shaking his head; "I have had time to learn it since, and to repent of it. Better that I had stood my ground and declared all. It was too late to *come back* and do it. When passion clouds the judgment one is apt to commit acts that can never be redeemed; to enter upon courses that cannot be retraced."

"And—*you* killed Rupert!"

"Yes. I thought I had good cause. In one sense of the word I had rich cause, for how dare a man, above all, a brother, come between husband and wife? Rupert was your brother and mine, Leolin, the son of our father and mother: nevertheless, I but gave him what he merited. I judged so then; I judge so now that I am on my dying bed. Let it pass."

"Yes, yes," acquiesced Leolin. "Let it pass."

But the lord's excitement was rising, and he, despite his own words, pursued the topic. Sybilla went round the bed and wiped the dew-drops from his brow.

"Did any young wife of honour ever serve a husband as mine served me? And I loved her so! She was as the very apple of my eye. Rupert must needs thrust himself between us. He must come down to the place and whisper tales to her and set her against me! Was it pleasant, think you, to hear that they met in their stolen walks almost daily; that they shut themselves in the Keep to avoid my eyes? Those shameful facts became known to me. Then I went to John Gaunt and questioned him—your good father, Sybilla,

and our ever faithful friend. I asked him why he harboured Rupert, who was showing himself to be my bitter enemy. Gaunt, in his straightforward way, avowed that Rupert had come to him unexpectedly, craving hospitality for a day or two, and that he had given him a hearty welcome, unaware of any reason why he should not give it. He added that Rupert had stayed longer than was expected, but that he believed he was going away that very evening. —Will you give me that?" broke off Guy, pointing to a wine glass that stood at hand: and Sybilla held it to his lips.

"I charged Gaunt not to say I had spoken to him," continued Guy. "And I watched. If I found him mooning after my wife again, I meant to give him the heartiest thrashing one man can give another. I watched; watched all that day and saw nothing: *she*, so far as I could make out, did not leave the house. At night, she excused herself from the dinner table, and we sat down without her. At first I thought nothing; but, as the dinner went on, a notion crept into my mind that she might have stayed away to meet Rupert. Leaving my guests, I went to her rooms and could not find her; I went to the Keep, but she was not there. Finally, suspicion and rage growing stronger and stronger with every minute, I came upon them both in the west tower. What sort of a moment do you suppose that was for me?"

Neither of his auditors answered. Sybilla had heard all this before.

"How I could control myself, I know not, but I *did;* and I stood there, and watched, and listened. The moonlight streamed into the chamber; it was quite light. They were sitting side by side on the old velvet settle, *abusing me.* For every taunting word that Rupert said of me, she had a worse. She was shedding tears, and openly lamenting that Rupert had to go away. He sat holding both her hands; presently he bent forward and kissed her. As I am a dying man, it is true, Leolin. Kissed her on the cheek.

"I nearly cried aloud in my agony of passion; I was feeling for my double-barrelled pistol—for I had it with me—when the clock in the quadrangle struck out ten. She started to the casement, saying something about the lateness of the hour, and Rupert followed her. I could not fire then; I meant to do it, Leolin; for I might have shot her instead of him: and in that moment, as I stood waiting, she turned and saw me. You know the rest."

"I—yes—I know that one was killed," hesitated Leolin, feeling that he did but very imperfectly know anything. "We thought it was you."

"The first ball touched him not; before I could fire again, he had sprung upon me, and we had a deadly struggle. In this struggle the pistol went off by accident; not of intent, for I could not get my hand free to act; and to this moment I do not know whether it was any movement on my part or on his, that caused it to go off. Rupert fell. I was mad with rage, blind with passion, and I assure you I

have not too clear a recollection of what was done. You know what my fits of rage would be on occasion, Leolin: I was in the worst then that had ever befallen me; mad, I say to you; mad with jealousy, with my uncontrollable sense of wrong. I beat him on the face with the end of the pistol. I killed him—*killed* him."

A pause. There was a great deal yet that staggered Leolin. "Of course I can understand," he said, "how easy it was to mistake Rupert for you after death, as you were in many respects so much alike and the lower part of his face was unrecognisable; but he wore your clothes. And it was by the clothes that people judged."

"Not my clothes, Leolin; he wore his own. It chanced that he was in evening dress that night, as I was, he having been dining at Knox's: and black suits, you know are alike. His shirt, you are going to say, bore the name and coronet of Guy Pomeroy. True. But when he was last staying at the abbey our linen had got mixed, through some carelessness of the women; Rupert took some of mine with him to London, leaving some of his with me: and—was it chance again?—that evening he was wearing mine. How did I know it, you ask. I did not know it—how could I have known it?—I learnt all such details in the days that succeeded."

"But he wore your watch and chain, Guy; your signet ring; your——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Guy. "As I looked down on Rupert lying in the moonlight, knowing he was dead, a revulsion of feeling came over me. Not of sorrow for him; no; but of thought for the consequences. For the first time in my life, I went into a panic of fear. Would they *hang* me for this?—the thought, that they might, took possession of me. How could I escape, I asked myself; what could I do? There flashed through my brain a conviction—and no doubt a true one—that had it been Rupert to survive, he would have got away to safety much better than I; the Lord of Pomeroy was a man of more mark than one of his younger brothers, and would be more minutely sought after. Then I thought—looking upon him—no one can tell now which of us it is, and it shall be supposed that it is I who died. Taking off my watch and chain, my ring, my studs, I put them upon him; emptying my pockets of their contents, I thrust them into his pockets, transferring what he had in his to mine. And then I made my escape."

"To—where?" asked Leolin, breathlessly.

"To the Keep."

"But how did you get to the Keep? How——"

"Stay, Leolin; you shall hear that later. I made my escape to the Keep; and Jerome came to me as speedily as he was able, knowing I must be there. Whilst the abbey was yet in its state of commotion, consequent on finding its lord lying dead in the haunted room, Jerome came to me. He brought me food that night; he brought me food and clothes during the few days that followed;

and the evening of the grand funeral, *my* funeral, he quitted the abbey for good, and took up his abode here at the Keep. A week or two later, when the pursuit after the escaped man—Rupert the murderer, as he was being called—was somewhat slackening, I ventured on my own escape, and got away."

"Unaided?"

"No. Aided by John Gaunt."

Leolin, glancing at Sybilla, looked the surprise he felt.

"Sitting over our bit of fire here, the doors barred, the narrow windows darkened against peering intruders—though, indeed, little can look in save the stars in the sky—I and Jerome held frequent consultation ——"

"Guy, Guy!" interrupted Leolin, with painful vehemence, "why did you not declare yourself then? It was not too late."

"I thought it was. Then I should have had to stand my trial; there's no doubt of it; which I might not have had to do had I boldly declared myself at first. I did not relish a trial; I would not risk it. Besides, I was still in that state of mind, between rage and misery, that I really did not care what became of me; and a life of travel in remote lands looked more tolerable to me than one of stagnation, even though I could have reigned again the unmolested Lord of Pomeroy. Could I have taken her to my heart again? No, never."

"I see. Go on, Guy."

"Poor Jerome was worse than I; more timorous. Distress at the turn things had taken, suspense, anxiety for my safety, seemed to be wearing him to a shadow. Equally afraid of my essaying to escape, and of my staying where I was, Jerome was not to be envied. 'You can never attempt to go of yourself, lord,' he would say to me, 'and I am but a poor weak old man, and of what use can I be to you?' 'There is a man who could be of use,' I answered Jerome one day, 'and that's John Gaunt; and I think I'll trust him.' We did trust him, Leolin: that he would be faithful I knew well, whether or not he might be able or willing to aid me: and Jerome fetched Gaunt the same night to the Keep. You may imagine his surprise."

"He did aid you?"

"With his whole energies. It was Gaunt who arranged everything: lent me money, took a passage for me in a ship going to China—for I chose that place to try first, of all others—and drove me away one evening at dusk in his gig, I attired in rough clothes, as an under-keeper, with a red woollen cravat bound about my throat and mouth."

Leolin drew a deep breath of relief. He seemed to see as in a picture the peril and the escape. "And you got safely there, Guy?"

"Safely there, to Canton; unmolested and unsuspected. I went

as a steerage passenger; we thought it best; calling myself John Cook, and passing as a man who was seeking relatives that had settled in China. From Canton I embarked again, and made my way to George and his wife in India. You remember, it, Sybilla?—the night I came, and how I startled you?"

"Ah, Guy, shall I ever forget it? When the news of the fatal affray here came out to us, that Guy had been killed by Rupert, and that Rupert had flown from justice, and could never succeed," she added to Leolin, "my husband had no scruple in assuming his right, as Lord of Pomeroy. George intended to sell out and come home; but before he made his arrangements for doing it the regiment was ordered to a remote, uncivilised district that was in a state of disturbance, where we found no proper accommodation of any kind. Nevertheless, I was glad of the change for myself and the two children—we had two then. One evening when Captain Barkley, as he was then, was sitting with us in our confined quarters, Moore entered, and told George that a man wished to see him—wished it very particularly. 'Who is he, and what is his name?' said George; so Moore went back to ask the name, and brought word it was John Cook. We had been enquiring for a man to do odd jobs about the house, and concluded it was one come after the place. I said I would go and see what he was like—as he was to be my servant more than George's. There he stood in the twilight; *Rupert*, as I thought at first. I was not in very strong health then, and I sank down on a chair, half fainting at his imprudence, and wondering whether we should be able to shield him. 'How could you come here, Rupert?—how shall we succeed in concealing you?' I whispered. 'It is not Rupert, it is I?' he answered, as he unwound the handkerchief from his chin, and I knew the voice, for Guy's and saw the face. A feeling of bewildered horror came over me. I screamed out, and it brought in George and Captain Barkley."

"Go on: tell him all," said Guy.

"We took you—we took him into the sitting-room," she resumed to Leolin, "and there Guy told his tale, Captain Barkley of necessity becoming a confidant. Guy told us all. How our hearts ached for him! Thomas Barkley took up the wrong warmly and clasped Guy's hands, and said that henceforth he should be dear to him as a brother."

"And a true brother he has been to me to this self-same hour," added Guy: upon which Leolin began to feel somewhat small, as he remembered the animosity to that gentleman which he had been nourishing.

"Captain Barkley took Guy that night to his own quarters," continued Sybilla, "passing him off as a servant of his mother's, despatched out to him on a confidential mission; in private, treating him with the deference and consideration due to the unfortunate Lord of Pomeroy. We did not intend to keep Guy with us long,

neither would he have stayed; it was too hazardous; but he got an attack of fever. We nursed him through it, and then he departed again, to be a wanderer, as he expressed it, on the face of the earth. He and George made all their necessary confidential arrangements; George remaining ostensibly the Lord of Pomeroy. Guy wanted him to accept all the revenues, save a mere pittance for his own support —I think you and he nearly quarrelled over that part, did you not, Guy?"

"Something like it," answered Guy, a faint smile for the first time parting his lips.

"It ended in George's accepting a fourth—I think it was—for our own use: the rest, though regularly transmitted to George, was invested by Major Barkley for Guy. Since George's death, I have retained only the same sum—a fourth. You have wondered, I know, at my living so quietly, Leolin," she added, her eyes seeking his; "you did not know, and I dared not tell you, that the rest went to Guy."

No, Leolin had not known it; could not have suspected it. He was taking shame to himself for the hard thoughts he had given to Sybilla.

"And this accumulation of money will now pass to you, Leolin," put in Guy. "Barkley has done all that is necessary in readiness for the transfer. I always intended it for you: as soon as my death takes place it is yours."

"You are too generous," murmured Leolin, the tears rising in his eyes. "But surely I have no claim to it?"

"Who else has a better? My own child is amply provided for; Sybilla will take the whole of the revenues now: she and her little son. I went again to India not long before George's death. Ever restless, flying continually from one place to another, never remaining long in one, yearning perpetually for the home and the relatives that were never to be mine, my feet turned of themselves once more to India and to George."

"I—I—can't quite see yet," burst forth Leolin, to whom a remembrance suddenly suggested itself: and in truth, one unexplained puzzle after another crowded so rapidly through his mind as to utterly bewilder him. "If Rupert died, as you say, Guy, how could he have come over here from Spain in a barque? Hildyard's head clerk made the passage with him."

"It was I who came, not Rupert," answered Guy. "I have heard of that from Sybilla. Collins mistook me for Rupert. It was easy for him to do so. He knew Rupert well; he did not know me, for he had never seen me; moreover, he believed I was dead. The great resemblance deceived him, and he fully thought he saw Rupert. Charles Knox mistook me for Rupert the other night, and spoke to me."

"I know—I see," again mused Leolin. "Did you land?"

"Of course I did. And made my way here, to Pomeroy. Not for the first time or the last, Leolin. Do you wonder that I should so yearn after this, my home, that I could not keep altogether away from it? Four or five times since my death have I come here."

"It was a perilous risk, Guy."

"It was. But I disguised myself cautiously, and chanced the peril. Old Jerome was always on the look out for me, I believe, not knowing when I might appear: wearing his flesh off his bones with terror when I was here; inventing excuses to keep people out of the Keep. Do you remember his excuse to you, Leolin, not long ago, when you were here before ten o'clock one morning, and nearly pulled the bell out? I was in bed at the time, and had to dress hastily and conceal myself—who knew but you might take a fancy to walk up here? You asked Jerome what he trembled at: he was trembling for me. Poor faithful old man! His has not been a path of roses."

"And so, this ghost, that has so terrified the abbey from time to time, has been yourself! And you knew this!" he added, turning to Sybilla.

"Certainly I knew it," she replied. "Stay, Leolin! I see what that reproachful look means: you think I ought to have told. But I could not: I had given a solemn pledge of secrecy to Guy. Once or twice I thought you must have suspected the truth, when I insisted upon it that *the lord* was the lord still. You could not expect I should call the erring Rupert Lord of Pomeroy. At least, you ought not to have expected it."

"How could such a supposition occur to me?" returned Rupert. "I had seen Guy buried with my own eyes; others, as we were led to believe, had seen Rupert since, living: the very wildest stretch of imagination could never have pictured the truth. Guy, why did you show yourself in that manner to terrify us?"

"Do you fancy I did it for pleasure?—or to frighten people?" asked Guy. "No, no. Could mortal man, in fair health, accustomed to activity, immure himself within the walls of this confined Keep every hour of the four-and-twenty? I could not. I was obliged to steal out in the dusk and darkness to stretch my limbs, to walk the consuming fever out of my frame; and, can you wonder that I have frequented that west-tower, whence I could look down upon what was once my happy home—upon the servants that were once mine—upon, now and again, upon *my child?*"

"You have frightened some of them nearly to death, Guy."

"People don't die of fright," he answered. "The mystery will shortly be cleared for them, for I am only waiting for death. They can make the ghost a joke for the future, Leolin."

Leolin bent over his brother, his voice taking a tenderly anxious tone. "You talk of dying, Guy, but I know not what disease is upon you. Is it incurable?"

"Quite incurable. It is an inward complaint, induced by anxiety,

mortification, and grief; and it is sometimes lingering in its process, as it has been in me."

"But you should have advice for it."

"I have had that. When the symptoms became unmistakable, I was in Canada, Barkley with me as usual —— "

"Barkley seems to have been a true friend to you," impulsively spoke Leolin, the entrance of Jerome affording opportunity for the interruption.

"There is 'a friend,' you know, 'that sticketh closer than a brother.' Barkley has been that friend to me. Only for a short while, at times, has he left me since he sold out at George's death. He has gone about with me from place to place at home and abroad, shielding me in all ways, looking out for any danger that might be ahead. When I have been here, Barkley was not far off. Sybilla is giving him house-room now, for my sake. But, about my illness? I was in Canada when the symptoms grew too serious to be neglected; not thinking much of the doctors over there, we came home. Barkley took a small furnished house in an obscure part of London, and called in the best medical aid to be had, representing me as a friend from Australia. My fiat—a speedy death—was soon pronounced, Leolin: there was no hope."

"No hope!"

"None. Alleviation there might be, but not cure. We stayed there many weeks, indeed months; everything being done for me that could be; the disease, meanwhile, advancing slowly and surely. When it had pretty nearly spent itself, when a few weeks, as the doctor thought, would bring the end, then I came down here to the Keep and Jerome—for I should not like to die away from Pomeroy. See what it has made of me!" he concluded, holding up his wasted arm. "No ghost was ever thinner than I am. And I think now you have all the explanation, Leolin."

"Not quite," answered Leolin, running over various items in his mind. "I have yet to learn how you could get into the west wing at will."

The lord looked up at his old servant. "Shall we tell him the secret, Jerome? In strict usage, according to tradition, it ought to be known but to the reigning Lord of Pomeroy."

"Ah, sir, what matters it?" answered Jerome, not perceiving that his master had spoken but in jest. "The future Lords of Pomeroy will have less cause for secrets, maybe, than some of the past had. And Mr. Rupert knew of it."

"To his cost and mine," sighed the lord. "There is a subterranean passage, Leolin, from this place, the Keep, to the haunted room in the west tower. The entrance to the room is behind the nun's picture; the panel turns noiselessly. That was how Rupert entered that fatal night; it was how I entered—then, and since. There is a set of keys to all the locks in the west wing: the bunch hangs in the underground passage."

Leolin turned to Jerome. "You knew of this secret communication between the Keep and the abbey?"

"Before you were born, sir. My late master, the old lord, was anxious on this account that I should live at the Keep. He did not want others to find the passage out. But oh!" added the old man, lifting his hands in imploring appeal, first to Leolin, then to Sybilla, "won't you please leave the lord now? This talking and excitement may kill him before his time."

CHAPTER XXX.

LAID TO REST.

It was Friday and fast day. Father Andrew sat at his frugal dinner: two eggs, the loaf and butter, and a potato salad. He was cutting a huge slice off the loaf when old Marget came in, her cotton gown pinned up round her, her bonnet on hind-before; for she often made a cleaning day of fast day, and that was her ordinary cleaning costume.

"Here's Jerome come across from the Keep, master," she began: "he wants to have speech of you. I was on my hands and knees, stoning the passage flags, with the lower half o' the house door shut and bolted to keep folks out while the flags are wet, when Jerome puts his head over the door, shaking the bolt all the while, and says he must see you this moment, whether or no. He's a shaking of it still—just as if 'twere a matter o' life or death."

"Let him come in," said the priest. "He won't hurt the flags."

Jerome appeared; some cause of emotion evidently troubling him. His face had never looked so haggard or his eyes so anxious. His hands shook; his whisper had a tremor in it

"Father Andrew, you must come with me to the Keep. There's no time to lose."

"What's up?" asked the father, ready to joke as usual. "Have you got a goose for dinner, and want me to cut it up and help you eat it? I'd like to be at your service—only it's fast day, Jerome."

Jerome's low voice took a more solemn tone. "Father, it is to shrive a dead man."

"To shrive—what do you say?" wondered the priest, who had never known Jerome jest before.

"To shrive the erring soul of a dead man, father: a man who has been dead to the world more than nine years. I bid you come in the name of the Lords of Pomeroy."

Father Andrew made short work of his eggs, and departed for the Keep with Jerome. On the way, he listened to the brief relation of what he thought was the most singular history life had ever furnished.

"I thought how much it could be a ghost," was the first com-

ment he made. "Bless and save us all. The lord alive, and Rupert dead!"

"Ay," said Jerome; "it's a grim and droll thing to look back upon, sir. While the country, that time, was being scoured for Mr. Rupert, he lay mouldering away underground in the Pomeroy vaults; and the lord was hiding at the Keep with me."

"And walked out of it at night to terrify the men and maids! A wrong thing, Jerome. I could have supposed Rupert acting so in his mischievousness, but not the lord: the one was gay, the other grave."

"It was that frightened me more than all,—the walking out," wailed poor Jerome. "But, oh, father, I believe from my heart he could not help it; he had to walk about, in his terrible restlessness. No wonder he was taken for a ghost; ever since that fatal night he has been growing more like a shadow day by day. Every time he came back there seemed to be less left of him. What he has suffered these nine years, he alone can tell."

"Sorrow and grief will change the best of us," remarked the priest. "Especially if remorse be added. Poor Guy!"

"Blame him not, father," entreated the old man, lifting his careworn face. "True, it was not right to kill his brother; wretchedly wrong: but it may be—it may be——"

"May be what?" cried the priest, as Jerome hesitated.

"That what happened at that time could not be gone aside from by him or by her—the lord and his wife. The prediction had to be worked out. Her light and foolish conduct, and his revenge upon it, might have been but just a part of it—of the fate that was hanging over them both—over all the Pomeroys."

"Don't talk such nonsense, old Jerome," rebuked Father Andrew.

Down by the bedside, her eyes streaming bitter tears, her hand locked in her dying brother's, knelt Joan Pomeroy. It was the day following the one told of in the last chapter, and the lord's last day of life. That but a very few short hours of that life remained to him now, was only too apparent.

"To have hidden yourself from us to the last, Guy!" reproachfully sobbed his sister in her bitter grief. "To have allowed others —Sybilla—and Major Barkley—and Jerome, strangers by blood—to know that you were in life, even to see you at will, and to keep it from *us!*"

"They knew it before, Joan; I could not help myself," murmured Guy. "It was too dangerous a secret to be disclosed."

That had passed when Joan was first brought in earlier in the morning: but she had never risen from her knees, her scalding tears had not ceased to flow. Leolin was there, also Sybilla; and now appeared Father Andrew, more filled with wonder than he had ever been before. Major Barkley stood at the foot of the bed.

A question had arisen in some of their minds during the night. Leolin put it to his brother.

"Guy, is it to be made known—the fact that it was you who lived—that Rupert died? Would you like that it should be?"

Something like a smile actually flitted over the lord's face. "By to-morrow morning I shall be dead as Rupert—what then can it matter to *me?* It must be made known for the sake of the young Rupert's rights. They will now be indisputable. A few hours more, and he will be the true legitimate Lord of Pomeroy. Leolin, your opposition must cease."

"I thought Rupert was alive, you see," stammered Leolin, feeling a great and sudden shame, he could hardly tell why, for his machinations against the child.

"And what though he had been?" retorted Guy, with a touch of his old sternness. "You did wrong, Leolin—and it has not served you. However, the past is past. Sybilla, Rupert is a brave boy. He will make a more worthy lord than some of us Pomeroys made, if all tales be true."

"Heaven grant him grace to be all he ought to be!" fervently aspirated Sybilla. "It is the one great aim of my life, under God and the Church, to make him such."

"Ay; I saw that in India. I loved him, too, the brave, right-hearted little lad. Tell him that poor John Cook, to whose bed he used to bring his pretty picture books during that fever time, and his pretty loving prattle, was his Uncle Guy. He will be a good and true-hearted man; a noble chieftain: Jerome here has sung his praises to me. Sybilla, is it true that he and my child are attached to each other?"

"Very much indeed," she answered, after a moment's pause of surprise. "But, Guy—if I, pardon me, catch arightly the drift of your thoughts—I would remind you that because they are attached as children, it does not follow that they will be as man and woman."

"I know that," he faintly replied, for his artificial strength, called forth by excitement, was failing; "I was but glancing at a remote contingency. The child assures the world, I hear, that she is to be the future Lady of Pomeroy. Should the childish love, now existing between them, grow into reality later, you will not set your face against it, against my child, Sybilla, from remembrance of her mother's sin?"

"Oh Guy, how could you think there was need to ask it? Indeed, you have my hearty promise. I love Mary."

"It was but folly in your wife, Guy!" pleaded Joan, lifting her tear-stained face, in excuse for Alice.

"And what, but sin, is such folly as that?" was Guy's stern reproof. "It was sin to me; sin in *her;* for, in regard to our wives, you knew, and *she* knew, a Pomeroy had ever been held as sans peur et sans reproche: and it led to sin, and crime, and misery. Do not excuse her to me, Joan."

"You will see your wife, won't you, Guy?" again pleaded Joan, who was always for peace.

"You may bring her to see me when I am dead. I wish her no ill; let her convince herself that the ghost was myself, and so her terror will subside. No more argument, Joan; I will not hear it."

"Only just to speak your forgiveness," implored Joan. "It will be such a comfort to her."

"She has my forgiveness; tell her that. To meet would bring only pain to both; I think I can safely say so; and, what end would it answer? I will not see my wife—as you call her—again in life. I saw her the other night, you know, in the haunted room; looked at her well by the matches I lighted; ay, and touched the hands which she had just sent through the pane of glass. Even then, she only came up because she thought it was Rupert."

"To warn him, Guy."

"Just so; to warn him; I think nothing else. No, she and I will not meet; and, remember, she must know nothing until I am dead. Then give her my forgiveness. Neither will I have my child brought here; better not, for her sake."

"Oh, Guy! Would you deprive yourself of giving Mary a last embrace?"

Guy's heart heaved with emotion. "Better not, Joan. See what an object I look now; I should only startle her. No: I have borne a great deal of late years, and I can bear that. I have left a long letter for her. Tell her that her papa loved her always; that he has had nothing else to love, save her, for years and years. And now—if you please—I would—be left—left with Father Andrew. I am growing faint."

"Leolin, shall it not be peace between us at last?" whispered Sybilla, as they went out, her sweet eyes seeking his. And Leolin's answer was to put his hand frankly into hers.

"It is of no use striving against fate, Sybilla," he said. "Your child must be the undisputed lord now, and no wish of mine and no scheming can alter it. But I no longer have the wish. Last evening, before I heard the startling fact of Guy's return, I had promised my wife never again to take act or part against Rupert. I may love the boy yet. I might have loved him before, but that I steeled my heart against him."

"And I may be truly, really, friendly with your wife?"

"I hope you will be. Come with me and see her now. Sybilla," he added with emotion, "knowing what I now know, I can only apologise to you for the past; and I do so with all my heart. Every moment's reflection brings to me a greater sense of shame for the part I have acted."

With the grey light of morning, Mrs. Pomeroy, in much wonderment and dread, was taken by Joan and Sybilla to the Keep. Guy,

Lord of Pomeroy, lay there, dead now. Sybilla, with her woman's heart, had prepared Alice as gently as she knew how for what she was to see: nevertheless, when brought face to face with him who had once been her husband, she started back, as Leolin had done, with a cry of horror.

"There is no cause for fear," spoke Sybilla. "He is at rest at last—gone to rest and peace. He bade us say that you have his full forgiveness for the past, his good wishes for the future."

"And—he—has only died now?" gasped Mrs. Pomeroy, who could not at once realise the stupendous facts.

"Only now. He died at dawn this morning. It was Rupert who died on that fatal night; not Guy."

"And he has been still the Lord of Pomeroy!" breathed Alice; her mind all confused. "None other had a right to be. And I might have continued to be the Lady."

Nobody answered *this*. Even Father Andrew, who had mostly a kind word for all, stood with folded arms and bent brow. Poor thing, she had probably meant nothing by the remark.

"Why did you bring me here?" she asked, with a burst of tears.

"To see him," compassionately spoke Sybilla. "To show you that what has startled you—and others—so much of late, was himself, not his spirit. He wished you to be convinced of that."

"Better touch him, madam," put in superstitious old Jerome, when she was at length turning away from the sight, her sobs nearly choking her. "It is said that if we touch the dead we don't dream of them: better just touch him."

Alice Pomeroy put out her hand and laid it upon poor Guy's cold forehead. But she could not bring him back to life, or restore the happiness of which she had deprived him; she could not hear him speak the forgiveness she had long unconsciously yearned for.

What a commotion it was that set in at Abbeyland! The inhabitants ran up in excited groups to gaze at the gloomy ensign hoisted half-mast high at the abbey, and to listen to the marvellous news that it floated for Guy, Lord of Pomeroy. Sure never was so wonderful a romance enacted in history.

They *saw* him as well as heard of him. Guy lay in state in the chapel from the day of his death until his interment, and all the world went to look at him. The poor battered face, *his* supposed face, had been covered up that other time; now it was open to view; the well-remembered, never-to-be forgotten face of Guy of Pomeroy.

The funeral ensued. Once more, and in one sense for the second time, Guy Pomeroy was consigned to the vaults of his forefathers; not with the former honours, the stately grandeur given to him before—or, rather, in reality, to Rupert. This ceremony was of the simplest. But the crowds assembled to witness it were almost beyond precedent, for the wonder had been made known everywhere. The

circumstances attending that other time were miraculously great, but these were greater.

It took place on New Year's Day. A bright day for the inauguration of the coming year. The ground was glistening with a sprinkling of snow that had fallen in the early morning, the sun shone in the clear sky. A contrast to it all looked that dark procession winding out of the abbey, bearing in its midst the velvet-covered bier. Following close upon it, in right of his position as head of the house, walked the young Lord of Pomeroy; behind him came Mary, led by her Uncle Leolin; then Major Barkley. Jerome, weeping bitter tears, headed the attendants. And the death-flag, for the last time in this history, waved over the gates of Pomeroy.

(*To be continued.*)

LINES.

"Give me my youth again."—GOETHE.

Restore my youth! oh sad appeal and vain;
Its rosy dawn, its sunbeams and its flowers,
Its happy dreaming, give me back again
Its very sorrows, brief as summer showers,
The light and shadow of its golden hours;
Give me my youth again!

Restore my youth! when in the pleasant shade
Of leaves, in all their flush of summer pride,
I lay at ease within the flowery glade
By white and odorous blossoms canopied,
And pictured hopes that long, long since have died;
Give me my youth again!

Restore my youth! when to the myriad stars,
My child-eyes turned in solemn marvelling
And dreamed that, throned within their golden cars,
Bright spirits swept the heavens on starlit wing.
Now, now, my soul too much to earth doth cling;
Give me my youth again!

Restore my youth! my youth that is no more,
Its promise dimmed, its simple faith turned cold;
Hushed the familiar tones it knew of yore:
The day-light glory shades of night enfold,
Now that my heart in sorrow hath grown old;
Give me my youth again!

J. I. L.

BALZAC AND HIS PUBLISHERS.

"TO be celebrated and to be beloved," the sole and immense desire of Honoré de Balzac—a desire which very few have been able to realise—was in his case distinctly fulfilled long before the close of a life made up of vicissitudes, storms, privations, quarrels—a life of indefatigable labour, and whose end, so premature and so grievous, was lamented, in spite of many jealousies, almost as a national calamity.

He died in all the force of his vigorous nature, younger than many a young man, regretted by his friends and by his enemies, pathetically resigned to his fate, although he had barely begun to taste the sweetness of that renown for which he had so laboriously struggled; and, in direct contrast to Chateaubriand, taking the literary world by a sad surprise, and his own domestic world by a grief for which his biographers have not yet found adequate words.

Victor Hugo, in the funeral oration which he spoke over his grave, pronounced the intellect of Balzac to have been sovereign and splendid. Classing together his many works he described them as forming but one single work, "living, luminous, profound," wherein the whole of the civilised life of the day was to be seen coming and going with a force and reality which was felicitously united to the terrible and the strange; a work which was the simultaneous fruit of observation and fancy, uniting into one harmonious whole the true, the natural, the trivial, the material; in which the author, knowing how to sound the innermost recesses of heart and brain, every weakness, every form of sorrow and suffering common to frail humanity, was yet enabled, by one plunge of his free and vigorous nature, to emancipate himself from the morbid studies which produced melancholy in Molière, and misanthropy in Rousseau.

The praise is extreme; and it is quite possible that Balzac was in some degree indebted for so high a panegyric to the vivid regret which his survivors, men of his own stamp, would generously feel when the light of genius is prematurely extinguished. The book was not yet finished—the brilliant intelligence was luminous as ever—the bold hand unshaken. The last volume of the "Comédie Humaine" had still to be written.

The energy of will and patience expended upon twenty years of incessant composition exhausted a naturally robust constitution. At various periods of his life he denied himself both food and sleep, with a persistence which could not fail to tell fatally upon the strongest physical powers; and however fertile the brain which could produce, between the years of 1827 and 1848, ninety-seven novels, and this without the assistance of a secretary, or any help in the correction of proofs, it is a fact, although apparently a contradiction, that the work

of composition was with De Balzac extremely difficult and laborious. It was not possible to him to unite literary industry with a normal and necessary amount of rest. For whole months together he would deprive himself of fresh air, writing steadily for sixteen or seventeen hours out of the twenty-four, his door closed to his most intimate friends, and every letter set aside unopened, until such time as the work upon which he was engaged should be completed.

His manner of composition was somewhat peculiar. Before writing a single line of his book he had arranged everything in his head—subject, plot, incidents, episodes. He had fixed upon the spot where the scene was to be laid, and minutely settled how it was to be described. He had fixed everything in his mind with a tact peculiar to himself. It was his creation, solely his; and he would embellish it with exclusively jealous care. He had already drawn the likenesses of all the personages who lived in his imagination, and had endowed them with characteristic traits. He placed, dressed, adorned them—making them act according to the rôle which he had assigned to each. All this before he had taken up a pen.

Doubtless the work was unformed, but it existed. The pen with him was only a tool, a mere agent employed for matters of detail. At last he wrote, his rapid hand flew over the paper, and all in a breath he arrived at the end of his work. It was not yet the work itself, but it was a highly-finished sketch. Upon this sketch he then began the toil of corrections and alterations, more laborious than it is possible to conceive. Not only erasures in words and sentences, but whole chapters changed or suppressed to make way for other chapters, or new ones supplied which he might judge necessary to lead up to a change of incident, or to explain a passage which might otherwise be obscure. In this toil without end the pages would become a sort of shuffle at cards, which may be systematically arranged by a skilful hand whilst apparently mixing them together. A chapter, prepared originally for the middle or the end of the work, would be transferred to the beginning; whilst various others would undergo a contrary arrangement. New passages would have to be written in order to adjust these alterations in the chasse croisee of material. Fragments of incontestable value would be put in the background to make room for others which had been primarily dismissed. Such and such a description or scene, traced with excessive labour and care, would be cut to pieces or pared away like bits of marble—banished—recalled —then definitely abandoned.

It is only after this laborious work, or rather this series of labours, that the manuscript is supposed to be ready: but it will presently be seen what this *being ready* really means. The author gives it to the printer: the workmen receive it: they cannot read it—they hesitate —they spell—they guess at words only half written, and words which are not written at all. This is doubtless difficult, but it is nothing compared with what is to follow. The work of typographical com-

position is at last completed, and has to be passed under the eyes of a corrector, who, in concert with a man who holds the manuscript, reads it if he can, and corrects it as best he may. He corrects and renders readable what was not so before.

When this is done, a new proof arranged in columns is sent to the author. He can now read his own prose in printed characters. For any other author this would be an advanced—a nearly finished work; but, far from this, it is only now that a labour begins of which no one but De Balzac ever had any experience before. Between almost every phrase new phrases are inserted; between every word new words are added; in this manner a line may become a page, a page may become a chapter; one chapter may make two or three or four chapters, a quarter or a third of a volume. The margins, the intervals between the columns grow covered with corrections, erasures, and interpolations; a sinuous line indicates to the printers the route which they are intended to take; another line traces the route to a new line. They all cross and recross one another in a desperate manner; it is a tissue of lines, a chaos which is hardly like anything in the whole world except the proof which preceded it and the proof which is to follow; a spider's web, but far more complicated; a labyrinth which appears at first to be without beginning or end, but over which the printers, who know their man, triumph in time—in much more time than it would take to compose three times as long a work. From this peculiarity of composition arose no end of quarrels with editors, publishers, proprietors of reviews, who had to pay enormous extra charges for corrections. Buloz, the editor of the *Revue de Paris*, once attempting a remonstrance, and complaining "You are bent, then, upon ruining me, M. de Balzac?" the angry author furiously replied, "Take fifty francs a page and leave me in peace!"

The room dedicated in his later years to this literary treadmill—the description of which is thus graphically given by the man who was best acquainted with Balzac's literary life, M. de Werdet—was luxurious in the extreme: a green carpet thick as the moss in a woodland glade, covered the floor; an ebony cabinet, containing a choice collection of rare and precious books magnificently bound, filled the whole length of the room. Opposite, between the windows, which were so softly shaded as to produce, even at mid-day, nothing but a "dim religious light," was a statuette of Napoleon, given to De Balzac by the artist, who had intended it to replace the broken image in the Place Vendôme. He had pasted a paper on the hilt of the sword, and written on it:

"*That which he failed to accomplish with the sword I will complete with the pen.* HONORE DE BALZAC."

The author of the "Comédie Humaine," with a truly national self-glorification, sincerely believed himself to be as great, if not a greater, man than Napoleon.

Upon the chimney-piece stood a bronze clock and two large porcelain vases: a little table by the side of the fire was covered with souvenirs, a perfect arsenal of trifles and curiosities; and the comfort of the whole was completed by an arm-chair and a writing-table. Here, in the most absolute solitude and peace, with drawn curtains and shutters hermetically closed, lighted by four wax candles, De Balzac wrote, and wrote, and wrote, his pen flying over the paper with extraordinary rapidity. His dress was a long white robe like that of a Dominican Friar, fastened round the waist by a chain of Venetian gold, to which was suspended a paper knife and a huge pair of scissors.

Very different from these luxurious surroundings was the miserable attic where the young Honoré—his legs enveloped in a patched cloak, his shoulders covered by an old maternal shawl, a cap Dantesque in appearance, and of which Madame de Balzac alone possessed the pattern, his coffee-pot on one hand, his inkstand on the other—first began his literary career, labouring hard to cudgel forth an idea out of the still arid and stony fields of thought which later on he found so fertile and so rich! Nothing possibly more humble than this attic, whose gloomy windows looked out upon the courts of neighbouring houses; whose walls of a dingy yellow were painted with poverty and dirt; whose roof was slanting; whose disjointed slates let in the sky: hardly room for a bed, a table, and a chair! Under the name of Raphael, in the "Peau de Chagrin," Balzac thus describes his domicile, and adds:—"For three whole years I lived in this aerial sepulchre, working night and day without rest, but with an enjoyment I cannot describe! It seemed to me that study was the loveliest theme—the happiest solution of human life! The calm and silence necessary to the scholar possess I know not what of sweet and intoxicating; the sanctum itself bestows a sort of magic on all that it contains. The miserable table on which I wrote, the brown sheepskin which covered it, my piano, my bed, my arm-chair, the irregularities of the paper on the wall, every bit of my furniture, everything surrounding me, took life and became my humble friends, the silent witnesses of my future good fortune! How often have I communicated to them my very soul! How often whilst allowing my eyes to rest upon a bit of broken beading have I discovered new developments in a plot; a striking proof of a new system; happy words in which to render almost inexplicable thoughts!"

"You have mistaken your vocation, Honoré," said M. de Balzac, when, after nearly two years spent in the wretched lodging just described, half starved and worn out with unsuccessful efforts at literary success, he returned, a shadow, to the paternal roof. "Your attempts to create a name for yourself are evidently fruitless. You are now twenty-five. You have no position. Your work does not supply you with the mere necessities of life. You are on a wrong track, and it is time that you should consider seriously what is to become of you."

Such incontestable remarks were not to be gainsaid. The young author gave up the pen. He became the partner of M. Barbier in a printing-office. He was full of schemes, full of energy, full of hope —but this speculation also failed. He returned to his novels, deeply in debt. "Les Chouans," the "Médecin de Campagne," and the "Femme de Trente Ans," fixed upon him the eyes of the literary world. He continued to write with ever-increasing literary success.

No author ever understood better than Balzac how to make a bargain for his works. For some of the earlier ones he stipulated that he should be able to dispose of them three months after publication. With different publishers he would make different arrangements; sometimes allowing a year, sometimes more or less, for the sale of a particular book. Under such conditions "Seraphita" was to have been published in the *Revue de Paris*, although many quarrels were constantly taking place on the subject, M. Buloz being justly irritated at the perpetual delays of the author, and having taken occasion to remark that it was hardly worth while to take so much time over a book which the public could never understand, and which he very probably did not understand himself!

Similar arrangements were being made for "Le Lys dans la Vallée," one of his best productions, when the author discovered a proceeding on the part of the editor of the *Revue* which he resented as unjustifiable.

Having according to his usual original fashion desired that the first proofs should be printed with large margins, with a view to alterations and corrections, these unfinished slips were sold to a French paper publisher in St. Petersburg, by which means the romance, or rather the first sketch of the romance, was read in Russia before it was ready for publication in France. But how maimed and disconnected! Incomplete chapters; sentences without beginning or end! Interpolations, additions—there appeared to be two authors employed upon the same composition, one in Paris, who was giving himself infinite labour and pains to attain clearness and perfection; the other in Russia, who appeared wholly regardless both of reason and common sense! De Balzac flew to his publisher with all the eloquence which can be given by fury, and a lawsuit followed in which the author not only came off victorious, but obtained the whole sympathy of public opinion. No sooner was his triumph assured than he shut himself up in his study, and composed in the space of forty-eight hours an introduction to the "Lys dans la Vallée," which contained an honest history of the transaction, and a somewhat fiery reply to the unjustifiable attacks of which he had been the object. "I have been represented," he wrote, "as a man without faith and without principle—something between a literary Bedouin who lives on what he can get, sells books, pockets the price, but never writes them, and the adventurer who, like my adversary, sells what does not belong to him. It has been

said that I have sold one work to two publishers; but that scandal was soon set down by the men of mark in whose presence it was uttered. The fact is that there are a good many people in the world whose sole occupation is to repeat these idiotic mistakes, and as I have fewer friends than there are idiots, I find it necessary to declare that should anybody be deceived by caricatures, misrepresentations, miserable little journals and lies of any sort, and should attribute to me a colossal fortune, palaces, marvels—I know not what—that I am nothing but a poor author, preoccupied with my pen, working hard at a long story which may turn out either good or bad, but at which I work of necessity and without cause for shame, as Rossini wrote operas and Du Ryer translations; that I live a solitary life, that I have a few faithful friends, and that if I come of an old French family it is not my fault!"

To this he adds, that "tired of quarrels and misunderstandings for which both sides may mutually be to blame, an author being frequently as unsupportable to the publisher as the publisher is to the author, I have made choice of one sole publisher, of M. Werdet, who unites in himself all the conditions of activity, intelligence, and probity to be desired for the office; and it is probable that the friendly relations which ought to exist between an author and his publisher will never be troubled, since, besides the qualities I have named, M. Werdet is full of heart and delicacy of feeling, as all men of letters will be ready to acknowledge."

"Merci, De Balzac! mille fois merci!" exclaims the long-suffering M. Werdet himself, in answer to this announcement. "You recompense me for all my devotion, all my fanatical admiration, not only for your works, but for yourself. You realise, proprio motu, the greatest, the most ardent of my desires! You proclaim me your sole and only publisher! encore une fois merci!"

Unfortunately, the realisation of this supreme and ardent desire brought the too grateful Werdet into a great deal of trouble. He himself is forced to acknowledge, in spite of his "fanatical admiration," that there were two De Balzacs. The man such as he came from the hands of his Creator—good, generous, a heart of gold—and the man *an egotist*, who was corrupted by contact with the world. From thence a continual mixture of good and bad passions: on one side every good quality, friendship, and generosity of sentiment pushed to the very extreme; on the other, villainous faults, regretable weaknesses, pride, vanity, an inordinate love of money, an insatiable eagerness in the pursuit of it.

Returning to the history of "Seraphita," which M. Werdet eventually bought of M. Buloz, he soon found that his favourite author was not very easy to deal with. It took more than a year to induce him to finish it, but he does De Balzac the justice to say that he fairly endeavoured to do so, but whether from the weariness of an overtaxed brain, or from the work having been suggested to him

rather than the creation of his own spontaneous fancy, the effort appeared to be hopeless. One morning, nine months after the bargain had been made, he appeared before Werdet, his hands empty of manuscript, his countenance haggard, complaining of nights of study and an obstinate battle with his imagination; that his brain was empty, his fancy dry. "In vain I take a hundred cups of coffee nightly; nothing is of any use. I am a lost man!" The unhappy publisher was petrified with this confession, all the more so when De Balzac went on to say that nothing but change of scene could restore his failing faculties, that he must travel, must see new countries—must, in fact, have the loan of two thousand francs!

"And what then is to become of me? Who will finish 'Seraphita'? Alas, I see Buloz was right when he said you would ruin me!"

"On the contrary! In spite of Buloz and his idiotic predictions, I will be the making of you. I will not only return with 'Seraphita,' but with another book. I have it in my mind. 'Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Marriées.'"

De Balzac started, and for months M. Werdet had nothing but the bare glory and honour of his office. He began to think his pet author a little too fantastic, a little too tyrannical, a little too exigeant, when a letter, dated from Vienna, revived his hopes. "Seraphita" was finished. "The Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Marriées" very nearly so. All would have been well had it not been for the postscript:—"Apropos. My dear friend, I have no money. I have drawn fifteen hundred francs on Rothschild. You will receive a bill payable at ten days' sight."

"Delenda est Carthago," said Cato to the Senate. "You will ruin Werdet," said Buloz, prophetically. But it was too late to draw back; the fortunes of the publisher were bound up in those of the author, and the weakest went to the wall. The fifteen hundred francs were paid *at sight*, and De Balzac returned from Germany without any manuscripts at all, but he brought M. Werdet a few Viennese curiosities. On another occasion Balzac announced his intention of taking the diligence to Nemours, in order to compose in the quiet of the country a romance long promised, "Sœur Marie des Anges." "You must lend me five hundred francs—you remember I promised you the novel?"

"Quite true. Three years ago!"

"Well; in fifteen days you shall have the manuscript, from the title-page to the end."

Werdet advanced the sum required, and in fifteen days received the following:—

"Maître Werdet. I have finished 'Sœur Marie des Anges.' I dare not confide the MS. to the diligence. Join me at once, and you shall receive it. Be at Nemours at two o'clock. I will meet you.

"De Balzac."

A few hours' journey, and at the end a completed manuscript! What could be more promising—more satisfactory? The publisher arrived at the appointed place at the appointed hour. Balzac was there, and met him with shouts of his noisy, immoderate laughter.

"Manuscript? There is no manuscript! What, fag oneself to death under green trees? The idea is ridiculous! But I knew you wanted fresh air and a day in the country."

And they passed a delightful day, but the "Sœur Marie des Anges," so long paid for in advance, did not return with M. Werdet to Paris.

On his return from Germany, Balzac plunged into the pomps and vanities of the Parisian world, working little or not at all, and leading a life of dissipation and prodigality which threw all who were connected with him into a sort of despair. There were only two men who could cope with him, Alphonse Sevapeur and Charles Gosselin. And as a matter of course he hated both most cordially. His then sole publisher, Werdet, felt himself forced at last to resign that once enviable distinction. After two-and-twenty years' patience and loyalty, he gave way to a disappointment he could no longer disguise, and after a scene of violent reproach, and even of menace, the connection was dissolved. Fifty-four volumes of Balzac's novels, the best of his works, were sold to M. Béthune, Werdet retiring with the sum of 63,000 francs.

The days were fast approaching during which the last act of his own life drama would have to be played out, when the great novelist conceived what he himself described as the "audacious" project of publishing a complete edition of his works under the title of the "Comédie Humaine," classed in the following series:—

Scènes de la Vie Privée; Scènes de la Vie Parisienne; Scènes de la Vie Critique; Scènes de la Vie Analytique; Scènes de la Vie de Campagne; Scènes de la Vie Militaire; Scènes de la Vie de Province.

"Audacious," repeats M. Cayla; and yet these works represented the whole of modern society. The scheme was gigantic, the conception possibly too ambitious; but there is nothing moderate, there is nothing that is not excessive in temperaments of high intelligence and strong sensibility. It was not permitted him to bring the whole to a perfect end; but the "Comédie Humaine," with all its mistakes, its exaggerations, its shortcomings, remains a prodigy of patient imagination, fine and delicate observation, and profound knowledge of sad and erring human nature.

C. E. Meetkerke.

THE CHARCOAL-BURNER.

I.

A STRANGE race are the Charcoal-burners. Living apart among the woods, in huts roughly put together, and rarely mixing with the denizens of town or village, they seem, by their wild ways, to be a link between the old savage times and the modern days of civilization. They are a solitary people, pursuing their calling in the loneliest glades of the forest, never seeking to associate with others, never seeking to change their manners and modes of living, never assimilating themselves to the refinements, the religions, or the culture around them. Some say they never go to Mass, and all their baptisms (if any) and all their marriages are settled by laws of their own. At all events, they marry only among themselves; the reason, perhaps, being that to the rest of the community they are pariahs, with whom a man would be ashamed to connect himself.

Strange tales have reached my ears of the savagery of the Charcoal-burners.

"Their children are as untaught and wild as young wolves," said one. "They attend no school, they go to no church."

"Their dwellings are foul with smoke and dirt," cried another. "No doors, no windows, no chimney, and as to water, they can't understand the use of it. In fact, they live like savages."

"And why do they live such a strange life?" I asked.

"I don't know. They have always done it. They lived like that hundreds of years ago, and they live so still."

This was the answer I invariably received. No one seemed to possess any deeper knowledge; so I was fain to put up with the scanty information I could get. And, indeed, this is all I know of the Charcoal-burners to this day, for their huts lay so far in the recesses of the forest, that I never found time to pay them a visit, and prove, by the evidence of my own senses, whether the strange tales told me of their savage lives were too highly coloured or not.

I could fancy that in the lonely glades of that great wooded belt which stretches into the Black Forest, a race of men might grow savage. And finding themselves despised and shunned, they might learn, on their side, to contemn the civilization and the religion of those who scorned them. But would this make them wicked? Surely in the green, quiet cloisters of the wood, in the long, leafy naves of this great temple, in its shadowy and arched choir, the human soul was more attuned to worship the holy and the pure than in the city, where sin walks unabashed, insolent, and loud.

"You wanted to see a Charcoal-burner," said Madame Rodière

to me one morning. "Well, here comes the charrette of Pierre, the Charcoal-burner. Now you can talk to him, monsieur, if you will."

I ran out into the road, and followed the wheels of the cart till they stopped at the grocer's door. Then a tall, spare man, with iron-grey hair, sprang to the ground, and entered the shop. His face was hard and bronzed, the features good, the eyes piercing, the cheeks thin and hollow, with mouth firm, and grave to such a strange degree that it seemed *never* to have smiled. It was this which gave to his face a peculiarity so remarkable that I could not refrain from watching him almost rudely. He took no notice, however, of my steady gaze, as, with a singular display of memory, he enumerated the puzzling varieties of articles required by the community, whose commissioner he was. For all these things he had a pile of little packets, each containing money, and to my surprise he made no single error either in the reckoning of this, or in the name of the person to whom it belonged.

"I am astonished you should trouble yourself to remember all this," said I. "Why not write it down?"

"Monsieur, I cannot write," returned the Charcoal-burner, gravely. "We cannot learn writing in the woods; we must trust to our memories. The memory of a Charcoal-burner is good," he added.

He said this with a sudden flash in his fierce eyes, while there fell on his face an expression of hate and suffering indescribable.

"That man has a history, and a strange one," I thought, as I watched the shadow of pain come over his hard features, and leave them as composed and passionless as before.

"How old should you think Pierre to be?" asked the grocer, in his usual mincing voice, as the Charcoal-burner strode away to help Adolphe, the shopman, to stow the packages in the cart.

"I should think him between fifty and sixty," I answered.

The grocer chuckled with delight at this reply.

"Why, ten years ago," he cried, "there wasn't a handsomer young fellow in the woods than Pierre. At the utmost he is not more than thirty-four."

I was so astonished that I could only turn my eyes in bewilderment on the worn, hard face, whose aged lines of care and sorrow seemed so utterly to belie the grocer's words.

"Ah!" said he, "you may well look surprised, but I tell you the exact truth. That man has not seen more than thirty-four years of life—a hard, strange life certainly, and it has made him what you see him. In fact, he has never smiled *since*."

"Since what? since when?" I cried, half angrily.

"Since the murder. Of course you know all the story, monsieur?"

"Of course I know nothing," I answered. "You Ardennais are the most aggravating people upon earth. No sooner does a stranger

come among you than you talk to him as if he knew all your village gossip since the days of St. Hubert."

"Monsieur is half right there. But I thought Madame Rodière had told you the story of poor Elmire's death," said the grocer.

"I would rather hear it from Pierre himself," said I, "if, as I suppose, the story is connected with him."

"Hush, here he comes! Pierre," cried the grocer, "will you take a glass of pékie." *

"Monsieur knows I never drink aught but water," returned the man, taking up his last packets from the counter.

"This gentleman prays you to drink a health with him, and tell him how it is your face looks so old when you are still young. Why, Pierre, he has just guessed your age at sixty."

We all smiled except the Charcoal-burner, whose harsh face seemed to grow a shade older as he listened.

"I am little used to talking," he said, "especially in houses. Out in the woods I might tell the story, if the gentleman is not afraid to come."

"I am not afraid, Pierre," I answered.

"We Charcoal-burners are a wild lot," he continued, "and I should be sorry to tell a tale before them; but anywhere beneath the trees in quiet, I might, in my rough way, draw you out a shadow of the truth —only a shadow at the best, for words don't tell sufferings."

"I will meet you where you please," I cried, eagerly. "The lonelier the spot the better I shall like it."

"I'm watching a pile of burning wood in the forest, near the old cross in the Bastoigne road," he answered, "and if any day, for a week to come, monsieur will travel that way and blow his horn,† I shall hear it, and I will make my way through the trees, and bring you to the spot."

"I will come on Monday, Pierre," I said, "at two o'clock."

He nodded to me without a word more, and departed.

II.

Down in a little glen, where the trees grew thick and tall, shutting out the sun, and the loneliness was so intense that the voice grew hushed, and the heart seemed stirred with memories of other worlds, I heard in broken phrases, uncouth and roughly spoken, the story of Pierre the Charcoal-burner.

"I am the poorest man alive," said Pierre; "in all the world there's none poorer or rougher. In saying I am a Charcoal-burner, all's said in one word. I'm an outcast of the woods, and I know it, and I rarely trouble a town, for there I feel myself alone—not tuned, as it were, to the tone about me. I love the wild, free woods; and

* The Ardennes geneva.

† Travellers and sportsmen carry horns in the pockets, to blow if lost.

she loved the forest, too, with all her heart. There wasn't a sound in it she couldn't tell and interpret, from the song of the nightingale down to the weakest cry of the small insect on the grass.

"People said she was ignorant. She couldn't read and write; she couldn't say a 'Pater' in Latin to save her life; she was untaught and ignorant as a bird or a beast. I've heard the town-folks say this of her often, and I've smiled, and wished they were out in the woods with us for awhile. Ignorant, was she? Why, she knew every tree that grows; she knew every herb that springs out of the grass. She could tell you where the freshest water ran, and the greenest cresses grew. There wasn't a healing leaf in all the woods that she hadn't learnt to understand; and if you did but hurt your finger, she would spring aside, and come back smiling, with some sweet-smelling remedy in her pretty hand.

"Then the flowers! There was no eye like hers for flowers. She knew them all, and never gathered them as town-folks do, to throw away when they faded. No; she dried them in the sun, and kept them for the sick in winter. The rose and the gillyflower for colds, the lime blossoms for fever. Ah, what a store she gathered every summer! And with what wreaths and posies she decked out our little hut!

"We were brought up together, sir, so I know what I am saying when I tell you she was not ignorant. But like us all, she had no town-learning; her only books were the forest and the sky; but out of these she got a wisdom that might have put learned men to shame."

Pierre paused here, and his eyes looked out far away beneath the green glades, as though he saw there some sight, that filled his soul with the unutterable longing of sorrow.

"Down there, at that old gnarled tree, she used to meet me every day. Sometimes, at sunset, I think I see her still; but I know it is only fancy. I am so afraid, as you listen to my poor talk, you will think her rude and rough like me. You will think, because she was a Charcoal-burner's daughter, and because she loved such a man as I am, that her ways must have been like my ways; but I tell you, No. It is not in me to have such thoughts as she had, and to put them in such noble words. And it is not in me to learn the things from sky, and herb, and tree, that she learnt. Every little leaf and flower-cup told her its secret, and the stars, as they looked down on her, breathed into her soul such thoughts of an infinite love, of an ever-yearning pity, and eternal glory, that my heart would stop beating as I listened to her.

"Was she beautiful? you ask. I don't know, sir. Her face was not like any face I have heard called beautiful in towns and villages; but once, in a picture, I saw a face like hers. It was the picture of a woman in the wilderness, weeping, as she lay on the ground, with her hand resting on a book."

"Mary Magdalen," said I.

"It might be, sir. But *her* name, you know, was Elmire. I've made the woods ring with her name many a time in the old joyous days; and in the sad times since, I've whispered it to myself in prison, in such bitterness as few men know. You wouldn't think, sir, that she was a girl whom a wicked man would dare to love in a wicked way. And yet that misery came to her. If you were to climb to the top of that green knoll, and look westwards over the sloping trees, you'd see the smoke of the village where he lived. I never go there now. The sight of the place would set my brain on fire.

"He was a farmer's son, well to do: vile and cruel as a wolf; but clever, so the schoolmaster said, and rich, as all the world knew.

"He crept into the wood, and came upon her in lonely places, and insulted her with hot words of passion. Or he stole upon her unawares, when she sat at work beneath the tree, and fawned and cringed for a word from her. Or he threatened, and frightened her, when she came into the village for flax and wool. All things, all ways he tried, and he gained only her quiet scorn, and her untold loathing.

"We wild children of the woods have an instinct which warns us of a hurtful reptile, or a poisonous plant, and thus we avoid them, though we know not their names, and though we could not, in our ignorance, utter our reason for our fear. So with her: she hated this man from the first; and one day, in our wanderings, she told me she thought he would kill her, as a snake or a wolf might when hungry or angry.

"I laughed at this. 'He dare not lift his hand against thee, Elmire,' I said. 'He is a coward, and he knows that I should kill him if he did but touch thee.'

"Indeed, my anger burned so fiercely against the villain that Elmire had with difficulty kept us from blows. But for her prayers and tears, I would have rid her path of him long before. There was another hindrance, too—her father. With him lay all the root of this misery. He was a drunkard, and for drink he was willing to sell even his daughter. He was lost, swallowed up in that one vice; reason, affection, conscience, all drowned in it.

"Look yonder, monsieur, down that deep, narrow pathway, where the trees arch overhead so closely that the sunlight does but sprinkle sparingly the ground beneath. Do you see, high up on the tallest tree, a white cross cut in the bark. That sign, cut by these hands, is a memorial of the foulest murder ever done in this land. There is not a lonelier spot in all the forest than the little glade that lies beneath that tree. It is autumn now, and the leaves are spare; but in full summer the tiny pathway you see yonder is covered up with foliage, and long grass so rank that only a forester's eye can trace

the track; and scarce any but a forester's foot can follow it, as it winds down, over crags and precipices, into the solitary dell below. In that dell the undergrowth is cleared away, giving place to softest turf; and through the midst there runs a little rill, trickling music all the day. Lilies of the valley, forget-me-nots, and wild roses edge the stream, with many other herbs and flowers, for which my rude, unlettered tongue can find no name. But Elmire knew them all, and she came hither constantly in summer time to cull and dry them in the sun. Except for that tall, solitary tree, the dell is open to the sky, and though it is so small that a man may pace it from end to end within a minute, yet here he seems to breathe a freer, fresher air, as, looking upwards, no shadow falls between the face and the blue heavens.

"Think of the loneliness of this spot, where a pebble flung into the stream startles the ear, and the sound of a footfall comes like a wonder. If a shriek of agony—if a cry for help went up to heaven from this lone place, no human ear would hear it. If some dreadful deed were done here, no human eye would witness it—no tongue could ever testify against the evildoer.

"Ten years ago, one August day, when the sun was blazing in the sky, I crept away from my fellows, and bent my steps towards this dell. All the hot morning, as I worked, I had thought of it longingly, and the sound of the cool rill trickling over the pebbles had haunted me, whispering of rest and freshness. So, while the others betook themselves to their siesta beneath the trees, I crept away, and wound round through the wood, following the music of the brook.

"Somehow it seemed to me that I did not step through the underwood, but that I broke through it suddenly, like a man would in a dream, and then I saw Elmire lying on the grass, in the glare of the noonday sun. It did not come upon me gradually that she was dead. I knew it like a flash, even as I beheld her.

"The place was silent as a wrecked ship in mid-ocean might be. Not a leaf stirred in the hot air, not a blade of grass quivered as I stood looking at her. I saw she was dead, yet I would not see it—I would not believe it. So, as the colour came slowly back to my face, as my heart began to beat again, I cried softly:

"'Elmire! Elmire!'

"There was no answer—no movement in the prostrate form; and then I knew the silence was the silence of death.

"I sprang across the brook and lifted her in my arms. I do not tell you what I felt. As I have said before, suffering has no words. The tongue cannot betray the agony of the soul, strive as it may. No; it cannot even utter the pangs of the flesh; true grief and pain are silent, and the woes that chatter of their smart are nothing.

"She was stabbed before she died. I could see the blood upon the grass. I could see the places where she had knelt and begged for mercy. And from her knees she had fallen on her face, and so I

found her—her hands clasped as she had lifted them in prayer, and her fair face pressed against the ground.

"'It is Luc Leroy,' I said, as I laid her back gently on the grass.

"I had not cried aloud for help, I had not even thought of it. Whether the horror of the scene, or the instinctive knowledge of the uselessness of cries in this lone place kept me silent, I know not. Neither do I know how long I sat with my dead love in my arms, before I roused myself, and rushed from that dreary sunshine into the dim wood.

"I came up this rugged path a madman, blind with grief and rage. Had I met Luc Leroy then, I should have torn his heart out. I ran on towards the place where I had left my companions, but before I reached them, I met *her* father staggering through the wood stupidly drunken. He stared at me with bleared eyes, and saw the blood on me.

"'What's this?' he said, eagerly. Seeing him helpless, I would have passed him in a silence that was half pity, half disgust: but the miserable man seized me, and shrieked aloud for help.

"'Let me pass on!' I cried; 'your daughter lies murdered in the dell.'

"The sense left in him was so little, that he caught at the words wrong.

"'Do you dare to own that you have killed her?' he shrieked. 'Help, comrades! help.'

"We were struggling together on the ground when they came running to the spot, and as they lifted me, my ghastly looks might well make them deem me guilty.

"'He comes red from the deed!' cried Père Martin, shaking with terror. 'Look at his hands!'

"The old man's drowned senses were so bewildered now, that he struck at me frantically, crying aloud the while on his daughter's name, and raving of her beauty and goodness.

"'He was jealous—this assassin here—he knows a rich man wanted my child; Luc Leroy would have made her his wife.'

"Meanwhile I fought with my fellow-workmen like a maniac. I strove to speak to them; I strove to tell them all that had happened to me; but my reason had gone wild, my heart was breaking, my lips were cracked, my voice only came in gasping sobs.

"'Elmire, Elmire! They say I killed thee! I, who loved thee better than my life. Are you mad, comrades? I tell you Luc Leroy is the man.'

"'Luc has just left me; he has been in my hut with me all the morning,' said Père Martin.

"As he said this, I flung myself on the ground in utter despair, and suffered silently the cords with which my comrades bound me. Then some stayed to watch me, while others went to the village to apprise the authorities of the murder.

"You perceive, monsieur, that when the gendarmes arrived they were necessarily already prejudiced against me, therefore my bearing and my words all seemed to them proofs of guilt. But a more certain proof was now forthcoming. Down in the dell, near the body of the murdered girl, they found a knife—my knife; it was covered with blood, and it had evidently been the weapon used against her.

"As the men spoke of this, I remembered, with a ghastly sinking of my heart, that I had lost this knife a day or two before in the wood, but I had mentioned this loss only to Elmire and her father. I appealed to him, now reminding him of this fact, but he answered me angrily that he remembered nothing of it.

"Then I sank into sullen despair, and went silently to prison."

III.

PIERRE paused a moment to recover himself, and then continued his sad tale.

"The trial drew crowds to the court. The chief witnesses against me were Père Martin and Luc Leroy.

"'The girl loved me,' said this last villain, insolently; 'naturally she preferred a man of my station to a mere Charcoal-burner. She flattered herself I should marry her. I had no intention of the sort, so I amused myself in talking to her.'

"'When did you last see her?' asked the judge.

"'At a quarter to ten o'clock, in her father's hut."

"'Was her father there?'

"'No, and I only saw her for a moment or two. She seemed frightened and begged me to go away. She said the man Pierre was jealous, and she should not like him to see us together.'

"'Did you leave the hut at her request?'

"'No, I refused to do so; and then she left it herself, saying she was going to gather herbs to sell to the chemists.'

"'Did you follow her?'

"'Only a step or two, and after a little talk beneath the trees, I returned to the hut, where her father found me.'

"'If you loved the girl, and were pleased to be in her society, why did you not accompany her in her quest of herbs?'

"'Well, the truth is, I didn't much like being seen with a Charcoal-burner's daughter; I should have been jeered at by my friends. Then, again, I was unwilling to arouse the prisoner's jealousy; he had threatened me on various occasions, and I wanted to avoid his violence, for the girl's sake.'

"Other falsehoods he uttered I cannot repeat to you. They madden me with indignation even now, as I think of them. Enough, that he slandered the girl he had murdered, while he strove to swear away my life.

"I never doubted he had killed her, and as I looked in his shrinking, cowardly face, I knew it, as surely as I knew there was a sun in the heavens.

"When Père Martin was called, I gazed at him eagerly, to see if there were any signs of sense in him. But no; his face was hopelessly dull, his brain hopelessly drowned in intoxication.

"'When did you last see your daughter alive?' was the first question put to him.

"'I don't know the hour, but I think it was about half-past nine.'

"'Why did you leave her, and what was she then doing?'

"'She was sewing. I left her to fetch a jar of pékie, which Monsieur Leroy had put for me behind the old cross, on the road in the forest that leads to Bastoigne.'

"'At what hour did you return to the hut?'

"'At ten, and I then found Monsieur Leroy there waiting for me.'

"'But if you do not know the exact time at which you left the hut, how can you tell it was ten when you returned?'

"'I know because Monsieur Leroy showed me his watch; it wanted two minutes of ten. He was angry because I had kept him waiting; he had been there, he said, nearly half an hour. This is how I became aware that it was half-past nine when I left home.'

"'You seem to know the time only from Monsieur Leroy; how is that?'

"'I did not know it from him. I looked at his watch myself.'

"'And what did you do when you reached the hut?'

"'We drank pékie.'

"'Till what hour?'

"'I don't know. We drank together till just before the moment when I met the accused, and he told me he had murdered my daughter.'

"'How did he look when you met him?'

"'He was wild and haggard, and his hands and arms were covered with blood.'

"'Do you recollect his having told you he had lost his knife?'

"'I remember nothing of it.'

"I repeat these interrogations and replies, monsieur, to show you that the chief point at the trial rested on a question of time.

"Up to a certain hour I was toiling with my fellow-workmen, and I was supposed to have committed the crime in the period which elapsed between the time I left them, and the moment I was seen by Père Martin. On the other hand, was Luc Leroy really found in the hut at two minutes to ten, or had he put his watch back, and by this and other means deceived his half-drunken companion?

"According to their own testimony, they had sat together drinking for nearly two hours; but I did not believe this. I imagined they

had been together only an hour, and the impression of a longer period had been cunningly made by Luc Leroy on the drunkard's mind in order to screen his own guilt.

"But it was in vain my counsel and I questioned and cross-questioned: we elicited nothing beyond the fact that Père Martin had 'tasted' the pékie on his way to the hut.

"'Did you sit down to taste it?' I asked.

"'Well, yes, I think so.'

"'Did you taste it more than once?'

"'I don't know, but I might have.'

"'And you sat down each time?'

"'Well, yes.'

"'Then how could you get from your hut to the cross, and back again, in less than half an hour?'

"'I walked fast.'

"After these questions and answers, the distance was measured, and it was found a man could walk it in half an hour.

"'But not an old man,' said my counsel, 'not a man who sits down four or five times by the way to drink.'

"'He must have left the hut earlier than half-past nine,' observed the Procureur du roi. 'His ideas of time are vague till he sees Luc Leroy's watch.'

"We fought a good fight, monsieur, my counsel and I, but we were defeated. I was found guilty, and condemned to a prison for life. My exact statement of the truth was entirely discredited; the loss of my knife especially was looked on as a flimsy invention; and but for the 'extenuating circumstances' which were presumed to exist in my passionate jealousy, and poor Elmire's love for the villain Leroy, I should have lost my head under the knife of the guillotine.

"Ah, monsieur, when I tell you that I, an innocent man, spent four years in all the sufferings of the Bagne, you will not wonder that my face has the lines of age, the marks of an iron servitude, the scars of a fire not yet quenched.

"Have you ever seen a wild bird beat itself to death against the bars of its cage?

"Well, I should have done that but for one thought—the thought of Elmire. The burning desire to avenge her kept me alive, and sustained me through all my miseries.

"This gave me hope to study a plan of escape; this gave me courage and fortitude to pursue it.

"'God is a just God,' I said to myself, continually, 'therefore I shall not fail in my purpose.'

"And I did not. I escaped, but how, and by what means, I am bound never to tell.

"Four years of prison had so changed me, that none of my old companions, looking on my face, would have said, 'There goes Pierre the Charcoal-burner.'

"To a free man of the woods like me chains had been a living death, and my anguish had made me old and ghastly when, once more at liberty, I breathed again the fresh air of the forest.

"I knew it was dangerous to return hither, nevertheless I came. I trusted one of my old friends, and he proved faithful. He hid me and supplied me with food, till the heat of the search for me was over. It is a hard thing for gendarmes to find a man in the forest; as well hunt for a wolf, or a wild boar, without dogs, as look for a fugitive in this wilderness.

"In six months my hair and beard had grown long and thick—it had become grey, nearly white, as you see, and I felt that the eye even of a detective would scarcely recognize the escaped forçat; much less then would the villagers see, in this white-haired, aged man, Pierre the Charcoal-burner.

"'Claude,' I said to my friend, 'I shall hire myself as a servant to Madame Leroy.'

"He was frightened at my scheme, but he could not dissuade me from it.

"I had heard from him that Luc Leroy's mother had married again, but her new husband had died suddenly, leaving her with an infant of whom she was passionately fond. This child was the source of constant quarrel between Luc and his mother, and in this dissension I hoped to find a weapon of defence and retribution.

"Moreover, Père Martin, no longer supplied with drink by young Leroy, was now his sworn enemy. Thus the ground was prepared for me, and I entered on the battle without fear.

IV.

"'Do you mean to hire that old man?' said Luc Leroy to his mother. 'He is a fool, and past work.'

"'He can work hard enough,' returned Madame, 'and his age is in his favour; old fools are scarcely such fools as young ones.'

"Words grew high between them; but, after a bitter dispute, the widow had her own way, and hired me for a year.

"'Look here,' said Luc Leroy to me, the next day, 'whose servant do you mean to be, hers or mine? If you are hers, I'll put your bones under the harrow every hour of the day; if you are mine, and you please me, you may have as much drink as you like, and we'll cheat the old woman together.'

"'I'm yours, young master, body and soul,' I answered; 'give me a drink now.'

"I never touched anything but water, monsieur, and I had a hard time in striving to deceive Luc Leroy with regard to my drinking propensities; yet, nerved as I was, and knowing failure would be death, I succeeded in this as all else.

"I grew apparently so helpless and drunken that the villain at last put his life in my hands.

"'See here,' he said to me one day, as he seized his little step-brother by the arm, 'isn't it hard a man should be cheated out of his inheritance by a weazel like this? Why don't you take the fever and die, little miserable? Psha! not you! there's no such luck as that for me!'

"I watched him more narrowly after this, and twice I saved the child's life, when a *seeming* accident would have crushed it to death. First, when stumbling against the boy, he flung him beneath the heavy wheel of a loaded waggon; and again in the mill, when only a desperate exertion of strength on my part extricated him from a frightful fate.

"But this constant watch over the child wore out my nerves and strength, and I resolved to put an end to it. So one night late, when Madame Leroy and I sat up together, waiting for her dissipated son, I said suddenly—

"'Madam, if you wish to save your little child's life, send it away.'

"'What do you mean, imbecile?' she cried, angrily: 'are you drunk again to-night?'

"'I thought, madam, you knew by this time that I am not so fond of drink as I pretend to be. I tell you, your son Luc is resolved to kill the little Henri.'

"The woman turned pale, and looked at me in ghastly terror.

"'I believe you,' she said; 'I know Luc is capable of any wickedness.'

"'I am worn out with watching the child,' I returned, 'and I will not promise you that I can save his life again.'

"Here I told her what had happened, and though she had heard this before from the child's imperfect speech, yet now that it came to her circumstantially, she trembled.

"'I will send the child to his father's friends to-morrow,' she cried, 'and I will delay no longer to make my will. Luc shall gain nothing by his wickedness.'

"'Keep your own counsel as to that,' I answered, 'and take care not to betray what I have said to your son. If he discharges me, you will have no friend.'

"She knew this, and fear made her cautious.

"'What new whim is this of my mother's?' asked Luc Leroy of me on the next night, when he found the child gone.

"'How can I tell?' I answered.

"'Find out then,' he retorted. 'What do I pay you and give you drink for, unless it is to be my spy?'

"'You let your mother perceive too clearly that you hate the boy,' I returned; 'that has made her send him out of your way.'

"'Ah, likely enough,' he said; 'and I do hate him, and let me tell you that when I hate anyone it is a bad thing for him. I hated

a fellow once, and thought I should never get a chance of doing him an ill turn, but the chance came.'

"'How, monsieur?' said I, in a stupid way, as I filled my glass.

"'Never mind; I found a knife of his in the wood.'

"'And how could finding his knife hurt him?' said I, with a drunken laugh.

"But I could get no more out of him then.

"A few days after this it came somehow to his knowledge that his mother was going to make her will in his brother's favour. This made him resolve on a desperate crime.

"'Jean,' he said to me, 'you are a good herbalist. Can't you gather me something that would kill a dog?'

"'Yes, monsieur,' I answered. 'I know where the hemlock and the deadly-nightshade grow; and if you made a decoction from either of these it would kill a man, much less a dog.'

"'Gather me some to-night,' he said.

"Instead of gathering them, I went to the captain of the gendarmes, who was a keen, quiet man, and I told him as much of the truth as I thought safe. I did not confess my identity, but I let him know that Luc Leroy had confessed to me the finding of a knife in the wood, which an enemy of his had lost, and he had also avowed that he had drugged old Père Martin on the morning of his daughter's death.

"This last fact had escaped him when talking to me of the night-shade. He tried to recall his words immediately he had spoken them, but seeing me stupid, careless, and unheeding, he grew at ease again, and dropped the subject.

"The captain of the gendarmes was a keen-witted man, silent and cautious. He hid a detective in the farmhouse, who, by my aid, crept about unseen, like a cat, and from a chink in the wall watched Luc Leroy as he brewed his deadly drinks. He had, of course, gathered the poisonous herbs himself, and it was easy to see by the skill with which he distilled them that he had taught himself something of chemistry. He tried the poison on a dog and a tame rabbit: both died; and now, apparently satisfied, he ceased his work, after filling a goodly-sized phial with the deadly water he had distilled.

"The detective and I both thought the wretched man aimed at his mother's existence; therefore we protected her life by every possible precaution. I feigned illness, and never stirred from my seat by the kitchen fire; where I saw every meal cooked of which we partook. As for the policeman, he had his own food, and no one suspected his presence, hidden carefully as he was in the lumber-room.

"'Arrest him to-night,' was the order given by his chief. 'We must prevent the crime he meditates.'

"Alas! we were too late! It was not prevented.

"As I sat that evening at my post by the fire a messenger came running eagerly from the little Henry's relatives to Madame Leroy.

"'The poor little thing is ill, desperately ill!' cried the woman. 'Come at once!'

"Sick at heart, and faint with fear, I followed the distracted mother, as she rushed from the house. The cottage where the child was staying with his grandmother was half a mile off, but we reached it in a few minutes, and the first glance I took at the little sufferer's face told me he was dying—*poisoned.*

"'This was how his father died,' said old Madame Coupienne, as she seized the hand of her daughter-in-law.

"The younger Madame Coupienne—or Leroy, as I have continued to call her—sank down by the bedside, sobbing. All her heart was with the little creature, whose arms now clung around her in agony.

"'Oh, my darling! my darling! what shall I do for thee?' she moaned, piteously.

"'What have you been drinking, little one?' said I.

"'Only eau-sucré, that brother Luc gave me.'

"I could bear no more. My heart reproached me, as though I had been guilty of this little sufferer's pain; and running wildly towards the village, I called upon all I met to help me to seize Luc Leroy, the murderer.

"We found him at work in the hay-field, sullen and quiet, but with a suppressed excitement in his manner, which told his guilt.

"'Unhand me, sot!' he cried, as I clutched him.

"As my fingers gripped him, I lost that quiet self-command that for years had hidden my rage and despair.

"'I am no sot! I am Pierre, the Charcoal-burner, whose affianced wife you murdered, and whose life you tried to swear away.'

"I was mad, and they had to tear me from him, as he lay writhing with terror on the ground. My unexpected words had pierced his shrinking soul, and in abject cowardice he confessed his crimes.

"His little brother's life was saved, monsieur, but Luc Leroy was most justly guillotined at Liège, for the murders of his stepfather and of Elmire, the daughter of Père Martin, the Charcoal-burner. Elmire was avenged, but I was a lonely man henceforth for ever.

"At Luc Leroy's trial he confessed every circumstance of his guilt. To ensure Père Martin's absence from the hut, he had informed him the night before of the spot where he would find liquor in the morning. No sooner was her father gone than he presented himself before Elmire, who, to be rid of him, escaped from the hut, and ran, as she thought, unseen to the dell. But he followed her, and grew so insolent that the unhappy girl told him that she hated and scorned him. He laid his rude hand on her at this, and then she shrieked aloud on my name for help. That roused his jealousy to madness, and he struck her, first with his hand alone, then with the knife. Even with the first stab he remembered the knife was mine; and when his fury was over, and his victim lay dead, he began to think he might put the crime on me. He washed the red stains from

his hands in the brook, and returned to the hut. Here he put back his watch, persuading the foolish old man, whom he had drugged, that he had been but half an hour away. On his return home he put his watch right again, and took care to compare it with a neighbour's.

"Monsieur, you know the rest, and there is much I have not told which you can guess. I have not touched on all I suffered again in confinement, while the tedious process of Luc Leroy's trial and my *réhabilitation* were got through with. The law would not give me my liberty this while, though justice acknowledged I was innocent; and when freedom came at last, it could not bring me back my youth and my dead love. Neither could it efface from my memory those sufferings in the Bagne, which are marked here on my face. As for Père Martin, I worked for him, and took care of him till the day of his death. I cut that white cross you see yonder on the tree on the day that the law at last pronounced me a guiltless and injured man. I shall always keep that cross white and neat while I live. It is the only memorial Elmire has. Monsieur, you have heard now all the story that Pierre, the Charcoal-burner has to tell."

AUTUMN SONG.

Now Autumn crowns the year with golden leaves,
The waving corn makes glad the reaper's breast;
With jocund song he binds the bending sheaves
Till evening's twilight bids him home to rest.

With mellow fruit the ruddy orchards shine,
And clover fields make fragrant all the land:
Wild woodbine tresses o'er the hedges twine,
With latest roses wreathed by Nature's hand.

In sunnier climes the clustering grapes recall
The time of vintage, dear to youth and maid;
How gay the dance when eve's soft shadows fall,
And tint with silver beam the glimmering glade.

Glides on the harvest moon through pathless ways,
Thick sprinkled with the starry flowers of night;
And tuneful voices raise the song of praise
To Him, the Giver of all joy and light.

Peace, meek-eyed Peace, with olive garland crowned,
Thy choicest blessings pour on our loved Isle:
Shielded from danger and war's angry sound,
Free may she flourish 'neath thy guardian smile!

E. B.

THE TWO ROBERTS.

SINGING softly to himself, Robert Edbury rode "over dale and over down" in the sweet stillness of the July night. Hardly a breath of air was stirring in the branches of the trees. Now and then an invisible night bird piped a solitary note to keep him company, and soft waves of light streamed over the hills as the queenly moon, well attended by her guards, rode indolently down the broad highway of heaven. The blue dome, looking soft as velvet, was, like the fabled path of love, strewn thickly with the golden kisses of the stars.

As he gained the last hill, whose summit gazed on the little watering place which was for a few weeks to be his destination, he involuntarily drew rein and sat silent a moment, enjoying the moonlight scene. On his left an old-fashioned brick house reared its twisted chimneys aloft. So close was he to it that its sharp gables seemed to cut the air over his head, and only a strip of green lawn, bordered by horse-chestnut trees, separated him from the windows, gleaming in the moonlight.

"Sceptre and crown I'd fling them down,
If I might ——"

Robert Edbury hushed his song when he perceived, for the first time, his very close proximity to the house and the windows.

"The substantial home of some substantial farmer," he said to himself. "I had better move on, or his daughters may think I am serenading *them*."

Too late! Just then a window was opened softly overhead, and a lady's face appeared at it. In the rush of bright moonlight Robert caught sight of the long ripple of gold-gleaming hair, and was sure that the face was lovely. At any rate, the voice was.

"Robert, dear, is it you?"

For half a minute Robert Edbury was mute with surprise, and made no answer.

"It is you, Robert. Why don't you speak?"

He spake then, low, and with hesitation.

"How do you know it was I?"

"Of course I knew it was you." There was a dash of petulance in the sweet voice now. "Who else but you would be riding and singing in that absurd way at this hour of the night, and halting before the house? Have you a cold, Robert? Your voice sounds different from what it usually does."

"Perhaps it is the night air," answered Robert, wickedly, and getting his wits partially together. "Or I may have cracked it with

singing." But still he spoke in the most subdued of tones. "I did not expect the pleasure of speaking with you."

"The very idea of your coming up on horseback at this night hour! You know you ought not to be out. Why did you do it? Where are you going? Into Spafield?"

"To be sure."

"But what for?"

"To see a friend."

"Who is it?" came the quick response. "Not—not Nelly Cameron?"—with a shade of jealousy in the tone now. "Are the Camerons receiving this evening?"

"Not that I know of," returned Robert Edbury, promptly. "I swear to you I was not going to see Nelly Cameron. I have not spoken with a single young lady to-day, except yourself."

"Poor Robert!" and a little laugh rippled lightly on the air. "But do go. You know what your health is, and that you have no business to be riding at this time of night. You ought to take better care of yourself. You will be laid-up to-morrow: your voice already sounds strange and altered. Good night."

"One moment," cried Robert Edbury, earnestly, as he leaped from his horse, fastened the bridle to the gate, and stepped inside beneath the window, where gleamed that mysterious, enchanting face. "Won't you give me a flower—you can easily reach that clustering bine by your casement. Perhaps—perhaps I shall wish to ask you sometime to forgive me some great offence. Won't you give me a flower for a token?"

"How strangely you talk. Of course I would give you a flower; but these are only honeysuckles, and you know we promised to give each other nothing but roses. But stay!"—the pretty voice caught itself. "I have a bunch of violets on my table. Would you like them?"

"Anything!—anything that comes from your hands!" whispered Robert, more sincerely than he always spoke.

The bright face disappeared a moment from the window and then returned—a white hand gleamed in the moonlight.

"There, take them, and now you must go! Quick! I hear some one stirring. Suppose it should be mamma! Good night, dear Robert."

The window was softly closed, and in an instant after Robert was groping for the violets in the wet grass. He found them where they fell. But, as they were falling, the quick eyes of Robert Edbury had discerned something, bright as a star, falling too. The small strip of grass where he had stood was entirely in the shade, hidden from the light by the large horse-chestnut trees, and he had to grope in the dark for this glittering thing. An instant's search revealed it to be what he suspected: a lady's bracelet. It was a slender circlet of gold, studded with crystal. The quick movement had unclasped

it from her arm; and Robert, with a smile, put it side by side with the withered bunch of violets in his pocket as he rode away.

"Sceptre and crown I'd fling them down,"

sang Mr. Edbury as he rode swiftly on in the purple dusk of the trees. "Sceptre and crown, if I had them, I'd fling them down for the one bare chance of hearing that lovely voice once again."

He was alone; there was no one to see him; and taking the violets out of his pocket he kissed them tenderly. It was most absurdly silly of him to do it: but who of us does not do silly things in the heyday of our youth's morning? Silly things that we blush for afterwards, perhaps; just as Robert Edbury blushed when putting the violets again quickly away.

"Sceptre and crown I'd fling them down,
If I might ——"

But his song got no further than that; it died away in thought.

Passing arm-in-arm down the crowded dancing-room of the Spa the next evening, with his friend Norton, Robert Edbury's quick ear was caught by a note which at once arrested his attention. He had said that he should know that divine voice again, hear it wherever or whenever he might, and he was not mistaken. A certain remonstrance lay in its tone: not to say disbelief.

"But who could it have been, Robert, if it was not you? It frightens me to think of it. It—it was somebody of your height and figure. It must have been yourself, Robert."

"But I tell you it was not, Jessie. I should like to know who it was."

"He was a *gentleman*, I am sure"—with a stress upon the word. "You need not be put out, Robert."

Robert Edbury turned: and saw close beside him, leaning on that other Robert's arm, a young girl surpassingly beautiful. Roses mingled with the bright gold of her hair, shone in the bosom of her dress, and a bunch of them was somehow intertwined with the slender gold wrist-chain attached to her fan.

Mr. Edbury caught his breath, as, turning her face, the girl's soft violet-blue eyes rested for a moment unrecognizingly on his.

"Who is she?" he whispered eagerly to his friend. "How lovely she is? What is her name? By heaven! I never believed in divine loveliness before; but here it is, pure and undefiled. What is her name?"

"It is Miss Chassdane," was the answer. "She and her mother live at the Grove, half a mile out of town."

"A farm-house," remarked Robert.

"No, it is not. It looks not unlike one. They are people of property. Yes, she is very pretty. I'll introduce you if you like."

Half an hour later Robert Edbury was bending over the young lady's hand in the pretty secluded gloom of a vine-wreathed window.

They were as much alone as it is possible for one to be in the heart of a busy, unheeding crowd. The first notes of a Strauss waltz were beckoning the dancers, and gay couples went laughing, hurrying by.

"You are not engaged for this valse?" Said Robert, eagerly.

Some remembered cadence of his voice struck the young girl's memory, and, forgetting to answer him, she looked at him doubtfully, while a rosy blush swept over her forehead. She half knew him and half did not.

"Will you let me look at your card?" he pursued, as with perfect courtesy in his voice and manner he took the bit of gilt and enamelled pasteboard, which she had tucked away amid the roses at her wrist.

"I—I half promised this dance to Robert," she stammered, flinging a quick glance over her shoulder into the swaying crowd.

"Then I shall claim it," answered the other Robert, with an audacious smile. He stooped and picked up a rosebud that had fallen, and then held it triumphantly before the flushed and startled face by his side.

"See!" he said, gaily; "I saved it from being crushed under foot. "Will you not give it to me?"

But she reached out her hand impulsively. "I—I never give roses to strangers," she replied, with a cold, frightened, angry air. "They are Mr. Robert Stonor's roses. Give it back to me, if you please."

"My name is Robert, too," he said, in the same gaily tender voice, though his dark face changed a little at her frank confession. "My name is Robert, too, Miss Chassdane. Therefore—may I not claim the rose?"

The soft blue eyes, filled with tears, flew up and met his. She knew him then. Frightened and ashamed, and trembling from head to foot, she rose impulsively to her feet: he took a step backwards: and they stood so, facing each other a moment in the gay, unheeding crowd.

"I know you now," gasped Jessie. "How dare you speak to me again—you are very presuming, sir. I will not bear it. Give me back my flower, and leave me."

"Nay," he said gently, but in the tone of a master, "is there cause for anger?" And in a low, reasoning, persuasive voice, he spoke to her for some moments, and the rising spirit was calmed. In spite of herself, and against her will, she was becoming irresistibly attracted to this man.

"Give me this one waltz, Miss Chassdane, and then I will give you back your rose. It will be a fair exchange. But, mind what I tell you; as sure as there is a heaven above us, the day is coming when you will offer me a rose unasked. Come!"

The old rose-red flush drifted over the young girl's face; his words, and more than all, his manner, impressed her as he meant they should. He stood with proffered arm courteously still beside her,

and, though protesting inwardly with all her might that she would not dance, she gave him her hand and in another moment they were floating deliciously together to the strains of the seductive music.

When it was over, Robert led her to her seat near some friends: her mother had not gone to the rooms that night. She looked very pale. The pretty rose colour had all died out of the sweet round cheeks.

"Are you faint?" he asked anxiously, bending over her. "Are you tired? Shall I get you some water?"

"No, no!" she cried, shrinking away from him. "I am not faint—but look at Mr. Robert Stonor. I have offended him. He is angry because I danced with you. Oh, what shall I do? He is my cousin, and has ill health, and he must not be excited."

Robert Edbury turned, and saw standing near him that other Robert, who threatened to be—or perhaps *was*—no mean rival. His ill health was evident. One hand was pressed to his side as if to still some pain there, and on his handsome blond face, which was marked by unmistakable traces of confirmed sickness, a cloud of jealous anger rested heavily.

The eyes of the two men met, and each knew the other for a rival.

A half smile of scorn as he looked curled Robert Edbury's lips. In a case like this, a man has no pity for the ailments of another. With a grave face he took from his pocket the rose bud and laid it in Miss Chassdane's lap.

"Here is your rose," he said, quietly. "I restore it to you at your wish. But remember what I said: and believe me, time will prove me to be no false prophet."

Without waiting for an answer, he bowed, and disappeared amid the throng of dancers, seeking her no more that night.

"Is Miss Chassdane engaged to that man? he questioned of his friend Norton.

"I believe there is no positive engagement," was the reply. "Mrs. Chassdane, it is said, objects to it."

"On what score does she object? Money?"

"Oh no, Stonor has a small, compact estate close by, and is well off. On the score of his uncertain health. Also: they are cousins."

"What is it that is the matter with him?"

"Some complication, connected with both the lungs and the heart, which, I conclude, renders treatment difficult."

"Do you think Miss Chassdane cares for him?"

"I don't think she loves him, Edbury—if that's what you mean. It seems to me that she likes him more as a brother. When eligible attentions are paid to girls, they feel flattered, you know, and respond accordingly. Nine out of ten of them understand nothing of their own feelings, and mistake friendship for love. Robert Stonor and Miss Chassdane have grown up together—have been like brother and sister."

Frequently they met after that. It was an unusually gay season at Spafield, and entertainments abounded accordingly. In the morning drinking the water, or making believe to drink it: in the afternoon sauntering in the gardens, or on the parade; in the evening at the rooms, or at private parties: two or three times did Mr. Edbury and Miss Chassdane meet, and linger together, and converse with each other. Robert Edbury's time was his own, and he stayed on. He could have stayed for ever. The two or three weeks' sojourn he had intended had more than doubled itself. For he had learnt to love her passionately; and all the world might see it for aught he cared. She, too, might see it, if she chose; but whether she did or not, he could not tell, judging from the grave and sweet dignity with which she met and bore back his eager attentions.

At length there came an evening when he was determined to put his fate to the test: to go on in this uncertainty was worse than torment. They had not been much disturbed by Robert Stonor: a paroxysm of his complaint had confined that gentleman to his own home.

And so, Robert Edbury went up to the old gabled house, before which his horse had halted that first night, and sought an interview with Miss Chassdane. She was quite alone. The long French window by which she sat, was flung wide open, and the low red sunlight, streaming in over her, lighted up her fair, gold hair and the roses in her dress.

"How beautiful she is!" he thought as he took her hand in his. "What if I should not win her, after all. But I will make a hard fight for it."

Jessie looked up inquiringly into his face. "You are very silent," she said: and then, catching the earnest look in his eyes, she blushed violently, and drew away her hand.

"I love you," he passionately broke forth in a low tremulous tone, breaking his emotional silence. "I have come to you this evening to risk my fate by saying this, to win or lose all. Jessie, you must know how I love you: how I have loved you all along, from that very first night that I spoke to you, neither of us knowing the other. Will you not give me some hope of love in return? do not send me from you an utterly broken and discouraged man!"

Jessie was silent for a moment—one long cruel moment to Robert Edbury—then the small sweet face was turned to him with gentle dignity. He knew his doom beforehand, ere she spoke the words.

"You must have known how useless it was to speak to me of this," she said. "You knew, surely you must have known, that I was engaged to my cousin, Robert Stonor."

"*Engaged* to him?"

"Yes. We are engaged."

Neither spoke for a time. The scent of the flowers, blooming

in the lonely grounds on this side of the house, away from the dusty and busy highway, seemed to mock them with its sweetness; the clustering shrubs and trees waved gently in the summer evening breeze.

He could not speak at once; the sense of his bitter loss was too great. The setting sun streamed in upon him, lighting up his distressed face. It seemed to him that the great old-fashioned clock in the hall ticked out the jeering words—

"Lost! Lost!! Lost!!!

"Engaged!" he said, at length, with a long-drawn breath. "I did not know it. But engagements, where no love is, have been broken many times before now!"

"Hush!" cried Jessie. "Do not speak like that again. It would kill him! You do not know what you are saying."

"Kill him!"

"If he heard it, I meant. He says he trusts me."

"And you are sacrificing yourself for him!—for a fancy! Hear the truth, Jessie. You care not for Mr. Stonor, except as a cousin or a brother. Examine your own heart, and it will tell you that you do not. You care for *me*. You love *me*. Many a half word, a half look has betrayed it to me. Yes, my darling, it is Robert Edbury you have learned to love; not Robert Stonor. Your blushes, my love, are betraying it now. You ——"

"What was that?" shrieked Jessie.

A low, smothered sound, half groan, half cry, had come in from the open window. It was so full of pain that a man would not care to hear it twice in a lifetime. Before either could rush out, Robert Stonor stood in the opening.

It was a figure never to be forgotten. His handsome fair face was distorted with either pain or anger; his pale lips trembled; his left hand was pressed, with the old familiar gesture, upon his heart.

"False, false that you are!" broke at length from his bloodless lips, as he seized Jessie with his right hand. "You told me you did not care for Robert Edbury! You told me ——"

A pause, a stagger; and with a frightful shiver, he fell on the carpet. Robert Edbury broke the fall partially, but was not quick enough to quite save him from it. Jessie flew from the room for assistance.

"Robert Stonor here!" cried the bewildered Mrs. Chassdane. "I thought he was confined to his chamber at home."

He had been confined to his chamber: but, alas, he had crept out of it that evening, and come up to the house to see Jessie. With the fond hope of surprising her in the usual evening room, he had gone round the shrubbery, intending to enter by the window, and had heard all.

On the floor, there as he lay, his head raised on a cushion by the hands of Robert Edbury, he died. The medical men said he

could not, in any case, have lived many months, if weeks, but that the agitation had killed him.

It was many long days after that, when she had risen from the sick bed to which this shock of sudden death had brought her, that Robert Edbury came to say farewell to Miss Chassdane.

The interview was brief, studiedly brief, for with the shadow of that dead man lying between them, speech was difficult to both.

"Good-bye!" she cried, reaching out to him an attenuated hand. "I hope you may find happiness and peace!"

"But we shall meet again," cried Robert, eagerly. "Surely—surely—sometime in the future I may come to you."

"Hush!" she cried, the tears rolling piteously down her cheeks. "You must not speak of that. Robert's shadow would always come between us, as he fell there on the floor. We killed him! We killed him!" and she wrung her pale hands together in strong excitement.

"Stop!" said Robert Edbury, quite sternly. "You are taking an altogether mistaken view of the truth. Ask your mother; ask any one. But you are weak and ill yet, Jessie, and the time has not come for me to insist on this. Let us think of him, poor fellow, as one who must, had he lived, have suffered much, and who has mercifully found peace in the rest of death."

He stood for a moment looking with a fond longing into the small, sweet face from which the summer roses had fled with grudging haste. Then taking from his pocket a fragile gold and crystal circlet, he held it out to her. It was the bracelet she lost that first night of their meeting.

"I found it under your window that night with the violets," he said. "It fell from your arm. Will you take it back now?"

A faint lovely tinge of red flickered into her cheeks once more.

"No!" she answered, looking into his dark face with tender, gentle wistfulness—"I—I don't want to recal that night, or anything connected with it. You may keep it if you like."

So he kissed her hand, and said farewell. But he left a whisper behind him.

"When the roses bloom again, remember me."

A year went by, and no message came. The second year he said to himself, "Surely she will send for me now!" But May and June crept by, and July came; but not one word came from Jessie Chassdane. He was growing sick with a wild and helpless despair, for he felt how worse than useless it would be to go, uncalled: when one day a letter came fluttering like a white bird to his heart.

"The roses are in bloom and there is one for you!"

LIGHTHOUSES.

LIGHTHOUSES are of great antiquity, but were long of a very imperfect kind; originally nothing more than open fires on the ground. Faraday says that the first idea of a Lighthouse was the candle in the cottage window, lighting the husband across the water, or the pathless moor. At an early period in the history of commerce the necessity for such structures must have been felt, and the ancients paid great attention to their construction. The most celebrated Lighthouse of antiquity was that of Pharos, near Alexandria, built by Ptolemy Philadelphus, B.C. 280. Josephus states that its light could be distinguished at 45 miles distance; it fell so recently as A.D. 1303. From this building Pharos came to be the general name for Lighthouse, and still exists in the French "Phare."

The Romans were diligent builders of Lighthouses, and were the first to introduce them into England. On the summit of Dover mount still stands the Roman Pharos which is supposed to have lighted vessels from the coast of France. Authentic records have come to us of Lighthouses at Ostea, Caprea, Ravenna, Puteoli, at the mouth of the Chyrsorhoas, on the Bosphorus, Boulogne; and Pennant gives a plate of what is supposed to have been a Roman tower at Gaireg, in Wales.

During the middle ages many such towers were erected, the most beautiful of which, as an architectural structure, is that of Genoa. The old English towers were rough and homely, and Lambarde describes them before the reign of Edward III. as "merely great stacks of wood."

The general management of Lighthouses and Buoys in England is entrusted to the Corporation of the Elder Brethren of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, known as Trinity House. This body was first incorporated in the year 1515, in the reign of Henry VIII., but for many years little was done to ensure the safety of ships by means of lights. With the increase of commerce and navigation, however, they became a matter of necessity, and in the time of James I. the first Lighthouse was erected on Dungeness Point.

The first stone Lighthouse in Europe was the celebrated Tour de Condouran, built on a flat rock off the mouth of the Garonne, in the Bay of Biscay. It was finished and lit up more than 250 years ago, but still continues one of the finest towers in existence; it replaced one built by the English between 1362-71, when the Black Prince was Governor of Guienne. The stone building was begun by Louis de Foix in 1584, continued through the reign of Henry IV., and finished in that of Louis XIII. Its height is now 186 feet, and its style of construction enables it to bear much more decoration

than our own more homely structures; it is also memorable as the first house which exhibited a revolving light.

Perhaps the most familiar and celebrated of all Lighthouses is that of Eddystone, which marked a crisis in the history of Ligthouse building, for the marvellous success which attended its erection led to many other works of the same kind. The Eddystone forms the crest of a reef of rocks which rise 14 miles S.S.W. of Plymouth Harbour; they are nearly in a line with Lizard Head and Start Point, and lie in the very path of vessels coasting up and down the English Channel; many a gallant ship has been dashed to pieces, and its sailors gone down within sight of home, on this cruel rock. The first attempt to establish a light upon it was made by Mr. Winstanley, who obtained the necessary powers in 1696, and finished his honourable undertaking in four years, though the light was first exhibited in 1698. The rock being uncovered only at low water and in calm weather, rendered the undertaking one of extreme difficulty, and the first summer was entirely spent in making 12 holes in the rocks, and fastening irons into them by which to hold the superstructure; sometimes for ten or twelve days together, the violence of the eddying sea would prevent all operations. The work of the second summer was the erection of a solid pillar on which to set the Lighthouse; and during the third, it rose to a height of eighty feet. The fourth summer saw the completion of what resembled a Chinese pagoda, with open galleries and numerous projections; the main gallery under the light was so wide that an eye witness recorded that it was "possible for a six-oared boat to be lifted up on a wave, and driven clear through the open gallery into the sea on the other side." Winstanley deserves every credit for his heroic endeavour to accomplish what had hitherto been deemed impossible, but a building so unsuited in every way to endure the violence of winds and waves could not stand, and we are not surprised to hear that, during a violent storm in November, 1703, it was entirely washed away, though we must regret that its brave erector perished in the fall of his own creation.

Three years after this failure, in 1706, the Brethren of Trinity House obtained an Act of Parliament to enable them to rebuild the Lighthouse, and the lease being taken by Captain Lovet, he entrusted the work to John Rudgood, who designed a simple and masterly tower which, avoiding the projections of its predecessor, offered as little resistance as possible to the elements: it was erected in the form of a cone, but its main defect lay in the material of which it was composed, for, like Winstanley's, it was of wood. It would take too long to follow the details of a building which was then considered a triumph of engineering skill: it is sufficient to say it stood bravely for fifty years and fell a victim to fire in 1755; the flames spread with rapidity through the dry and heated lantern, and in a few minutes the whole building was in a blaze. As the increasing trade in the Channel

impelled its re-erection, the proprietors took at once the necessary steps for the work, and casting around for the best man their choice fell upon John Smeaton, whose name will ever live in connection with one of the proudest triumphs of human skill and patience. He was by profession a mathematical instrument maker, and the matter in hand was wholly new to him, but he lost no time in devoting all his energies to it.

One of his first conclusions was, that the building must be of stone, thus combating the popular impression that "nothing but wood could possibly stand on the Eddystone." He carefully examined the plans of the two former Lighthouses, and became more and more convinced that their defect was want of weight; he therefore resolved to make his building solid up to a certain height and from thence hollow, and greatly to increase the diameter of the foundation, taking for his model the bole of a spreading oak-tree; he also made very extensive use of the process of dovetailing, then unknown in masonry, and rooted his foundations into the rock. His plans were made before he ever visited the scene of his future labours, but so skilfully were they laid that slight modifications only were needed. Nothing could bring before us more vividly the almost superhuman difficulties of this undertaking than the account of Smeaton's first attempts to land on the Eddystone rock. Day after day a storm kept him on shore, and when he did reach his destination the sea was so violent that to effect a landing was impossible. This was not the history of one but repeated trials, and we must ever honour the man who, by his patient perseverance, won so noble a victory over the greatest obstacles that nature in her angriest mood could lay in his path.

It was determined that the Lighthouse should be built of stone, and, all arrangements having been made, Smeaton himself fixed the centre and laid down the lines on August 3rd, 1756, and from that date the work proceeded steadily but intermittently, depending greatly on tide and weather; at the most not more than six hours' labour could be done at one time. By the end of November the necessary cutting in the rock had been safely accomplished, and the workers returned to shore to prepare the stone for next season. The building was fairly begun in the summer of 1757, and, as soon as the work had been carried above high water, it proceeded rapidly. Next season the task was recommenced in May, and to the engineer's delight he found that the storms of winter had left the tower unscathed. This season saw the completion of the solid portion of the building, which formed the floor of the store-room—the first of the necessary rooms for the Lighthouse keepers: the walls of these rooms are 26 inches thick; the blocks of stone "joggled and cramped, so as to secure perfect solidity." All through these anxious months Smeaton's sole thought was for his Lighthouse, and early in the morning and late at night would he gaze eagerly through his telescope from Plymouth Hoe, till the tall white pillar of darting

spray assured him of the safety of his cherished undertaking, every portion of which had been manufactured under his own eye. The next season proved so stormy that the men did not begin their work till July; but, so rapidly did it now progress, that by August 17th the last stone was set, and on October 16th, 1759, that light was first exhibited which for more than a century has been a source of joy and safety to the tempest-tossed sailor. The Eddystone Lighthouse is 90 feet high, and its light is visible for nine miles, and is now only one of the many beacons which light up the English Channel along its whole extent, and render its navigation as safe by night as by day.*

Eleven miles from the mainland of Scotland, near the entrances of the Firths of Forth and of Tay, lies a dangerous reef, which, so early as the fourteenth century, was a source of such peril that the Abbot of Arbroath caused a bell to be placed on what is now so well known as the Bell Rock. In 1799 a more than usually violent storm, which caused a terrible loss of life, gave rise to the formation of many plans for a Lighthouse on the fatal spot, and Captain Brodie proposed one of cast-iron, but his idea was not approved of. Other plans were also proposed and rejected, till the Commissioners appointed Mr. Rennie to examine the site, and report as to the best course to be pursued. After much deliberation he decided that a stone Lighthouse, built on the plan of Eddystone, would alone meet the exigencies of the case; the rock being uncovered by the water for less time than that of Eddystone, the difficulties of the foundation would be even greater, but he had no doubt they could be overcome and the work accomplished in four years. The report was adopted, and Mr. Rennie appointed chief engineer, with Mr. Stevenson as assistant, to superintend operations on the spot, and in 1807 the task was begun.

It is impossible in one short paper to follow in detail the difficulties, disappointments, and slow progress of the building of each Lighthouse, which were much the same in every case, varied only by the greater or less hindrances of tide and site. The history of the Bell Rock Lighthouse rivals in thrilling interest that of Eddystone, and should be read by all who can sympathise with the daring yet patient ardour of our great engineers. We must be content to say that it was happily completed by the end of 1810, and the light regularly exhibited after February 11th, 1811. Its cost was £61,332; its height, 117 feet, and its light can be seen for a distance of 18 miles.

Another celebrated Scotch Lighthouse, to which a brief notice

* Since these words were written it has been discovered that the foundations of the Eddystone Lighthouse have commenced to give way. The Lighthouse is consequently condemned. It was at first proposed to destroy the rock on which it stands by dynamite; but there appears to have been some objection to this plan: and the present lighthouse will probably give place to a new and still more perfect structure.

must be accorded, is that of Skerryvore, 24 miles west of Iona. It is the chief rock of a long reef of compact gneiss, which stretches for eight or ten miles, and is the only point which could afford the needful foundation; for forty-four years previous to 1844 it had been annually the scene of a shipwreck. The difficulty of landing was great, owing to the immense force (3 tons to the superficial foot) with which the Atlantic broke upon it, and caused the delay of the scheme till 1838, when it was undertaken by Mr. Alan Stevenson, who followed generally the plan of the Bell Rock, and, in spite of disasters and tempests, completed his work in 1844. Its cost was nearly £87,000; its diameter at the base, 42 feet, and at the top, 16 feet; and its light is a guide to mariners for 18 miles.

The total number of lights in Great Britain in January, 1871, afloat and ashore, was 514. Lighthouses in England are usually painted white or red, while those in Scotland are left their natural colour. The number of lights of all classes on the English coast averages one to nearly every eleven miles; or, if the floating lights are excluded, one to every fourteen miles; as a general rule, the horizon to be lighted is limited to fifteen or twenty miles, and the height above the sea level varies from 90 to 540 feet; depending, of course, on the situation of the foundation.

The French Lighthouse system is very perfect and comprehensive; the authorities class their lights in four divisions, according to their power and range of visibility. The 'Phares' of the first class are visible for 30, those of the second for 25, those of the third for 15 miles; while the fourth class, or harbour lights, are seen only for 6 miles. Of 13 of the principal French Lighthouses, the height varies from 157 to 397 feet, and the cost from £4,000 to £38,000; while the range of visibility is from 18 to 27 miles. The greatest recorded distance at which an oil lamp has been seen is that of the holophotal light of Allepey, in Travancore, which has been visible from an elevated position 45 miles away. This seems very wonderful, but is almost equalled by the revolving light of Buccalieu, in Newfoundland, which throws its beneficent beams for 40 nautical miles.

Something must now be said on the subject of the lights themselves, which, beginning with the old-fashioned beacon fires, have not yet reached perfection. The earliest system was merely that of blazing fires on the open ground; then a candle was tried placed in a lantern, and this was adopted at Eddystone, which was first lighted by 24 candles in a sort of chandelier. The use of oil lamps instead of candles is said to have been introduced by the celebrated engineer Borda, about 1780 or 1790. Various kinds of oil have been tried; for 50 years spermaceti was used, but the preference is now given to rape-seed, or colza, as the most economical and reliable.

The next step in advance was the adoption of reflectors, which gave rise to the *catoptric* system, which was universal for half a

century. The light thrown from a parabolic reflector is sent out in parallel rays, and can be seen for a great distance. Then came the *dioptric* system, which consisted in magnifying one large flame through a lens. It had been suggested to Smeaton, 1759, and had been actually employed in the Portland Lighthouse in 1789, but, through some mismanagement, it had fallen into disfavour for many years till revived by Augustin Fresnel in a paper read before the French Academy of Sciences, in 1822. The French Government at once adopted the dioptric system, which has been improved and perfected by Leopold Fresnel, Alan Stevenson, Arago, and Faraday; it is to this last-named distinguished philosopher that we are indebted for the present efficient mode of ventilating lighthouse lamps.

The light now generally adopted in British Lighthouses is a mixture of the two systems; inside the great glass lantern, usually about 12 feet high, is placed another framework of glass, corresponding to the shape of the lantern, and which, enclosing the lamp, is composed of, firstly, a band of glass round the middle, called the *lenticular* belt, which considerably magnifies the flame; the top consists of a number of prisms, which intercept the light which would otherwise be lost on the roof; and in the lower part of the apparatus is another set of prisms, which, in a similar manner, prevent the light being wasted below.

A curious light is one shown at Stornoway Bay, where the position of a rock is indicated by means of a beam of parallel rays thrown from the shore upon an apparatus fixed in the top of a beacon erected upon the rock itself; this is called an *apparent* light, from its appearing to rise from a flame on the rock, while in reality it proceeds from the shore 650 feet distant, and is refracted by glass prisms placed on the beacon.

Many other means of lighting, besides that of oil lamps, have been tried, though none of them are yet extensively adopted; lime light, electric light, magnesium, and gas. Sir William Thomson, however, considers that "the Lighthouse of the future is to be illuminated by gas, except when the situation is on an isolated rock, or where, for any reason, the price of coal is prohibitory." Professor Tyndall coincides in this opinion, and in a paper by Mr. Wigham, gas engineer, we find that this theory has been put into practice by the Irish Board of Lights at Howth Bailey, in Dublin Bay, where an actual saving has been effected by the substitution of gas for oil The most beautiful and interesting, perhaps, of all lights, is that discovered by Professor Faraday, the electric light. It is really nothing more than the white heat caused by the meeting of two opposing electrical currents, generated by a powerful machine, and conveyed by two copper wires, each terminating in a carbon point. These points are kept at a certain distance from each other, and when the two opposing currents meet there, the resistance of both causes the carbon to glow and become white hot; the incandescent state of the

carbon is the brilliant electric light itself. It was utilized by Mr. Holmes, who invented an apparatus for producing it, which was tried in 1859 at the South Foreland Lighthouse; it has, however, only been steadily used for six years, but has proved itself so successful that it merits a somewhat detailed notice. The stream of electricity which supplies the two Lighthouses standing one above the other on the chalk cliffs of the South Foreland promontory, is not derived from a pile or a battery, but is ground out of huge magneto-electric machines worked by a twenty horse-power steam engine—the current being conducted by wires from the machine-house to the Lighthouses. The light generated by this beautiful contrivance is kept constant by means of a clock-work arrangement which draws the carbon points closer together as they disperse themselves by combustion; it is necessary, however, to change them altogether every three hours, but as this is accomplished by the keeper in a few seconds, no real inconvenience is experienced. The cost is a more serious consideration, for we are told, while three keepers suffice for an ordinary Lighthouse, a staff of eight men is constantly needed to sustain the electric light at the South Foreland.

A large majority of lights on the British Coast are fixed, but a considerable number are revolving. Sir William Thomson considers the present system of lighting very far from perfect, and would have all Lighthouses so distinguished that they could not possibly be mistaken for ship or shore lights. He recommends the abolition of lights revolving at different intervals, which, he says, are often mistaken on a stormy night, and the adoption of Morse's telegraph signs. Each Lighthouse should have its own letter, which it should show incessantly from sunset to sunrise by means of Morse's dots and dashes, this being accomplished by a simple mechanical contrivance which would drop a screen before the gaslight, eclipsing it at intervals, thus by light and darkness showing the letters on Morse's plan; the length between the dots and dashes indicated by intervals of darkness, the dots and dashes themselves, that is the letters, by short and long flashes; this is called an *occulting* light. The originator of this idea was Babbage the mathematician, and his paper on the subject may be found by the curious in the pigeon-holes of Trinity House, though warmly approved of by such high authorities as Professor Tyndall and Sir William Thomson, the latter of whom has invented an eclipsing gaslight to be employed in Lighthouses, which was exhibited at a conversazione of Telegraph Engineers on December 2nd, 1874.

This branch of scientific discovery is, like so many others at the present day, still capable of further development, and the perfection and extension of the labours of our savants will doubtless furnish a theme of interest to the future historian of scientific research, and its practical application to the wants of Commercial Navigation.

A. G.

MAUD VAVASOUR.

I.

A BRILLIANT day in mid-August, the sun shining down upon the golden cornfields and yellowing woods: upon a great meadow of burnt, brown grass, and a billowy sea of white canvas—a large tent, or rather series of tents, to which point of attraction people were flocking in crowds.

The occasion was the annual flower-show held at Fleckford, and the scene within the exhibition was yet more animated than that without: for, through the narrow channels of space left between the tables and banks of plants, a lively and continuous stream of humanity kept flowing. There were young ladies and young men gaily chattering together, absorbed in themselves, and without any pretence of interest in horticulture: there were old gentlemen in warm and treasonable discussion of the judges' awards, and old ladies conscientiously burrowing after labels with long names, which they could not read when they had found; the whole aristocracy and gentry of Fleckford were present. But, amidst all that throng of people, no form was more noticeable than that of Miss Vavasour, and certainly none more worthy of attention.

Slightly taller than the majority of women, and with her unsurpassed loveliness of face, Maud Vavasour was sufficiently distinguished in appearance in any assembly without the slight singularity of dress which she invariably affected. It was one of her especial characteristics. Not her most intimate and confidential friend could have predicted what Maud would wear upon any given occasion; but one thing was certain, her attire would have in it a harmony, an artistic design, producing a beauty of effect the perfection of which her female acquaintances toiled after in vain. Upon this day, in deference to the character of the spectacle, and to the unclouded and congenial brilliancy of the weather, all the other ladies present disported themselves in every light and gay tint; but Miss Vavasour it had pleased to appear abroad among these butterflies clad wholly in black. A flowing dress of some soft, rich material draped her queenly form; about her shoulders was folded a scarf of the same: from the crown of her peerless head to the sole of her feet she was arrayed in the same sable hue, entirely without relief, except that against one side of her lace bonnet there nestled a spray of red japonica, so cunningly manufactured after Nature's model that it might have been mistaken for her own handiwork; while, again, from the end of the lady's parasol—black like the rest of her appendages—hung a bunch of crimson ribbons.

Thus she held her slow and stately course up the tent, her glance falling languidly, indifferently, upon the right hand and the left as she

advanced, her head inclining a single inch, and the corners of her mouth relaxing about the sixteenth part of one, at each of the numerous tokens of recognition which she received. She was accompanied by her father, who walked in silence beside her, for her lips were never once unclosed to let drop a remark for his entertainment. Fathers, in Miss Vavasour's opinion, were the appointed medium for the supply of costly dresses, of expensive pleasures, of desirable luxuries: that, and nothing more—except it were to be of occasional use as an escort.

This enlightened view of the functions of a parent is apt to result in a depressing dulness to the parent; so when Mr. Vavasour heard a cheery voice behind him asking him how he did, it was with a glad sense of relief that he turned to greet the new comer, who was a friend and fellow-magistrate. Miss Vavasour also recognized the tones for Mr. West's, but she remained standing coldly aloof; for, universal favourite as George West was, he was none of hers.

"Glad to have met you! Come with me, and I'll show you the finest potatoes you ever set eyes upon," cried Mr. Vavasour, linking his arm within that of George West.

"One moment!" said his friend. "You ought to know Mr. Ralph Irving, as he is to be your neighbour at the Abbey."

Hearing which scrap of information, Miss Vavasour knew the young man, who stood a foot or two off beside Adela West, George's young sister, to be the recent purchaser of one of the finest estates in the county; and therefore blest with a good fortune and position in the world, as well as with a handsome person.

"Well, Irving," said West, after the further greetings had been made, "are you coming with us to look at the potatoes, or am I to leave you to Adela's tender mercies?"

"Thanks. I don't know that I am much of a judge of potatoes before they are boiled," answered Irving, who had had some experience of Miss West's "tender mercies," and, having found them very grateful and acceptable to himself, was not indisposed to make further trial of them. And indeed it was enough to see the girl, with her soft and intelligent countenance, over which shadows and smiles flitted as clouds and sunshine over an April sky, to realize that she would make a pleasant companion for a longer period than a summer afternoon.

"You hear your charge, I hope, Miss West; and are prepared to fulfil it."

"Yes," she answered, giving him a pleasant smile. "I suppose," she added, turning kindly to Maud Vavasour, "we are all to take care of one another.—Mr. Irving: Miss Vavasour."

After the ceremony of introduction the three sauntered on, Irving between the two young ladies: but ever, as the minutes passed, he turned more and more often to steal a glance at the beautiful face of Miss Vavasour, whence now all the haughty indifference, the repellant coldness had fallen away, as a mask is laid aside: ever he

tried more assiduously to win her smiles, to gain her interest, growing each moment more oblivious of his older acquaintance on the other side. So marked became Irving's preoccupation, that when they at last in their course came upon the potato enthusiasts, Miss West made it an occasion for quitting her younger companions, declaring that she was not half seeing the show, and she was now going through it steadily, carrots, onions, and all.

"Do you like flowers, Miss Vavasour?" asked Irving, as, Miss West's defection hardly heeded, the pair pursued their way. "What are your favourites?"

"I can hardly say," Maud answered, rather at a loss, and seeking inspiration in the plants around. Flowers, moonlight, scenery, all these things in Miss Vavasour's opinion were very useful adjuncts to a flirtation, but without any separate existence of their own to be given a thought to by any sane person. "I love all, and have no favourites. A little time ago," she went on to say, a reminiscence coming to her aid, "my portrait was painted, and some flowers were wanted in the picture; so the artist inquired what I would have; but I really had no choice."

"Does the picture still await your decision?"

"Oh no!" she replied with her low rippling laugh. "I have some violets in my hands."

"Violets! What a want of harmony!" cried Irving.

"How uncomplimentary you are, Mr. Irving! I thought violets were considered the type of everything interesting and lovely. But what would you have given me?" she asked, raising her eyes with an expression of innocent wonder to the young man's face, and meeting his eager gaze.

"Lilies!" he answered quickly; "proud, imperial lilies. No, I am wrong. Roses rather—queenly roses—with their warm fragrance, their tender, glowing hearts, their soft petals."

"And their thorns?" suggested Miss Vavasour, laughing a little uneasily, and dropping her eyelids in some confusion beneath his glance of undisguised admiration. "Roses have thorns also."

"True: roses have thorns to poison and to wound," Ralph murmured in a meditative manner.

A brief pause ensued, which Miss Vavasour was the one to break. "It is a pity that I had not the benefit of your opinion until too late."

"But is it too late?" he asked, bending his handsome face eagerly towards her, and already forgetting the philosophy of the thorns, which might have warned him. "I am not much of an artist, but will you allow me to make a sketch of you?"

"To rectify the mistake of the violets?" said she, in a tone of interrogation.

"Yes; you shall have roses, and no stint of roses, in your hands and in your hair. Do let me make a trial, Miss Vavasour," he

begged, the enthusiasm of an artist in his tones, and something very like the passionate regard of a lover in his eyes.

This was a new form of flattery for her omnivorous vanity, and it piqued her appetite: only she thought fit to parade some amount of reluctance. "But you confess to not being much of an artist; and I should object to going down to posterity with crooked eyes, or a nose wandering in no particular direction."

"I will promise you a nose bent on a steady course, and eyes!—your very own," he added after a pause, with emphasis containing more tender meaning than any high-flown simile would have done. "Let me make an attempt: I am rather happy at likenesses, and—I want the sketch," he concluded in a soft lingering whisper.

II.

"You appear to be spending a good deal of time at the Vavasours', Irving," said George West to his friend a week later, as, the ladies of the family having retired, the two men were smoking the midnight cigar of confidence.

Ralph Irving blew a cloud of smoke from his mouth, and then replied in accents of deliberation: "Ah! yes; I am painting a portrait of Miss Vavasour."

"The deuce!" exclaimed George West, starting upright in his chair.

The irrelevant remark appeared to disconcert Mr. Irving. "Well?" he ejaculated in a tone interrogative and aggrieved.

"Nothing, my dear boy," answered his friend, sinking back again. "Nothing: provided you do not vary your artistic labours with love-making."

Ralph Irving, conscious that the art had been little, and the love-making much, laughed in an embarrassed manner. "And what if we have lightened the work in the way you suggest?"

"I hope it is not the case," said George West meaningly. "A man might as well take a stone Venus to his hearth and home for wife as Miss Vavasour."

Ralph Irving's lips curled themselves into a smile that was at first one of scorn, but which gradually melted into a happy light that softened and transfigured his handsome face.

"You do not know Maud!" he cried. "That crust of icy reserve only keeps up a more glowing warmth within her heart."

"Stop! stop! this is romancing too wildly. Save in a physiological sense, Miss Vavasour is untroubled with that inconvenient organ—a heart."

"You are prejudiced," said Irving, mastering his irritation. "Some antagonism, which is mutual, seems to exist between you two. I hope you will get to know and appreciate each other better when——" and he broke off in confusion.

"When what?" asked West, in as keen excitement as though he were ardently longing for this millennium of peace with Miss Vavasour. "When what?"

"Well, I was going to say when we are married; but I am afraid of being too premature. To tell you the truth, since we have got so far," the young fellow added with a short, happy laugh, "I spoke to Maud of my hopes to-day, and she allowed that—that—she was not altogether indifferent."

"Indifferent to Fleckford Abbey! No; the revenues of the Abbey will furnish her with most of the good things that her soul loves," West assented with a groan.

"Look here, West," said Irving, both his colour and temper now perceptibly rising. "I have already borne from you what I would have taken from no other man; but you are going beyond what I can stand. I am glad that I am pretty well off, so as to be able to surround her, my Maud, with things befitting her: I never so rejoiced before in the thought of wealth. But, hear me! If I were a beggar to-morrow, it would make no difference to Maud."

"Try her!" said his friend, drily. "Go to her, representing yourself as that beggar, and mark your reception."

"You little know Maud Vavasour; so I forgive you," said the lover, smiling disdainfully.

"Well now, see this," cried George West, leaning eagerly forward under the inspiration of an idea that had occurred to him for saving his friend from what he conceived to be an untoward fate. "Show me her disinterestedness: prove to me by experiment the magnanimity of her love, and I will become a glad convert, and for ever assist joyfully in the deification of Miss Vavasour. There is the loss upon those Risore bonds; make the most of it, and test her."

"He who can admit doubt does not know the perfection of love," said Ralph Irving, obdurately. And he could not later be moved from that position: he was neither to be goaded by sneers nor persuaded by sympathy.

"Now how is that deluded boy to be saved?" George West asked himself, when his guest had retired, and he was extinguishing the lights preparatory to going to bed himself. "He is pretty fast in her toils, but an effort must be made. I must think it over. I am glad I came to the bottom of the affair so early in the business: that is one point gained."

Despite his late hours overnight, Ralph Irving found himself first in the breakfast-room the following morning. To pass the interval of waiting for his friends, he stepped up to the window, and stared at the cheerful prospect without. The morning sunshine brightened all the land, the air was filled with happy rural sounds, but to him the fair scene was only a pleasant background for his mistress's face; the music in the air was merely a sweet chorus to the joyous song of love sounding in his heart. After a while, though, notwithstanding

his absence of mind, his eye was caught by the glimmer of a blue dress that showed every now and again between the shrubs of a sheltered walk that skirted the lawn. Irving knew that pale-blue robe, and also Miss West's habit of being out of doors in the early morning; and by a quick impulse he stepped through the open French window to join her.

When he had reached the walk, which was a favourite resort of Adela's, by a sudden rush of memory, Irving saw a vision of the numerous times he had paced that path with her. Especially there remained with him a recollection of the last time they had so walked together. With some object he had become momentarily possessed of her hand, and he now felt, with almost a sense of guilt, how long he had retained it in his clasp. In those days (how far back they seemed now!) he had surely almost persuaded himself that he was growing fond of Adela West; but ah! since then the true sun of love had arisen, quenching all minor lights. He felt, though, still a true affection for Adela; the calm but faithful affection of a brother for a sister; and he was conscious that of late he had neglected her.

"Good morning, Miss West; I congratulate you upon your successful practice of that most difficult virtue, early rising."

A violent start upon the part of the person to whom the foolish words were addressed; and then she turned and faced Irving: the colour varying in her cheeks, her hand pressed upon her side, as though forcibly to restrain the heavings of her bosom. "How you startled me!" the girl cried, piteously, when at last she succeeded in speaking.

"I am very sorry. I did not believe that you were nervous. My footsteps would not be much heard, I suppose, on the turf. But you must have been deep in thought. Tell me the result of your reflections," he added, smiling in blissful ignorance of their nature.

That morning Adela West did not enliven the breakfast table with talk as gay and brilliant as on previous days; but her face wore an expression of happiness which had been missing amidst her ringing laughter. How wrong she had been to doubt him! How foolish to imagine that it was but a vain dream of hers in the past that he had cared for her! For alas! Ralph Irving had taught Adela West to love him; and his affection she had fixed her heart upon as the one good that life held.

III.

Mr. George West sat alone in his study: an open telegram in his hand; an air of meditation upon his brow.

"From Ralph Irving, London, to George West, Esq.

"I find I cannot get away until to-morrow. Expect me about six o'clock."

This message Mr. West had received the previous evening from his friend, who had found, by his morning letters, that it was necessary he should go up to town with reference to those shares of which George West had made mention as a source of trouble. Irving had left Fleckford expecting that a few hours in town would suffice to transact his business; but in this hope he had been disappointed, and had consequently telegraphed as above to his host.

"Expect me about six o'clock," West murmured to himself in quotation. "Six o'clock; there is no train arriving at that hour, Master Ralph, so your plan is quite patent. You mean to be down by the three o'clock train, paying a little visit en route of two or three hours to the fair Maud. Well, an unexpected pleasure will await you there in the presence of your host, whose loving impatience to behold you again is past control."

At this point his reflections were interrupted by the entrance of his sister.

"Oh, George! I did not know that you were here; I don't want to disturb you. I only came to fetch a book."

"You do not disturb me, my dear," answered George, whose twenty years' seniority made him feel very tenderly towards Adela: she was almost as a cherished, beloved child to him. "Besides, I am going out directly—— Adela!" he called out, by a sudden impulse arresting the girl in her retreat: "Adela, is it your opinion that Irving's case with Miss Vavasour is a very desperate one?"

"Mr. Irving's case with Miss Vavasour a very desperate one! I do not understand you," Miss West exclaimed, a pang of undefined dread nevertheless piercing her heart.

"Pshaw! do you think his love for her likely to be lasting; or is it a sample of soon hot, soon cold?"

"Does Ralph love Maud Vavasour?" the girl gasped with quivering lips.

"Yes: how stupid you are to-day, Adela! I spoke to you because women are supposed to be sharper-sighted in these matters than men. But it is of no consequence. He told me of his imbecility himself," West wound up irately.

"He told you this?" Adela asked in low tones, and turning her head away from the range of her companion's eyes.

"Yes, and a nice fool I thought him; and, what is more, I told him so." There Mr. West came to a stop, for want of an audience. Adela, wounded, stricken, suffering, had sped from the room to battle with her anguish in solitude.

One hour later Mr. West was descending from his dogcart at Mr. Vavasour's hospitable portals. "Is your master at home?" he inquired of the servant who opened the door.

"No, sir: he is out upon the farm, I believe."

Of course the dear old squire was pottering about his fields. Mr. West had quite calculated upon that.

"No one in?" he asked next, insinuatingly.

"Miss Vavasour is, sir. Will you please to step in?"

"I think I will. I want to see your master, Wells, if he should return, upon a little matter of business," said Mr. West affably. And he was accordingly shown into the drawing-room, where he found Miss Vavasour seated alone.

"A better opportunity for my little bit of practice at the romancer's art than I could have planned. I know that you are no fool, Miss Vavasour; but my hope lies in your resembling many another selfish person in easily over-reaching yourself," was the treasonable thought within West's mind as he greeted Miss Vavasour, and commenced to gossip with her agreeably upon the weather and passing events. After a quarter of an hour of such general conversation, he led the talk into more personal channels, and at length introduced Irving's name, whereupon he proceeded to give the fair lady a confidential account of his friend's affairs: how he had embarked in a large mining speculation that was proving a failure, and how serious his position was in consequence, which statement of his financial situation would have considerably astonished Mr. Ralph Irving could he have heard it.

Just as this pleasing but apocryphal history was coming to a conclusion, a peal at the door-bell announced a fresh visitor, and, in accordance with Mr. West's expectations, Ralph Irving entered. This latter gentleman looked somewhat astonished at his friend's occupation of his especial citadel; but nevertheless shook his hand with hearty pleasure.

"Well, how did you find matters?" asked West, in reference to the business he had been engaged upon. "Better or worse than you had hoped?"

"A great deal worse," answered Irving, quite unaware of how he was playing into the other's hand. "But we need not bore Miss Vavasour with business."

"Oh!" exclaimed that arch conspirator, West, "I have been telling Miss Vavasour of your misfortunes, but she agrees with me that to us, your friends, the extent of your means can make no difference."

Irving was about to laugh at these fine sentiments aired on so small an occasion, when something in the expression of Miss Vavasour's face arrested him; and for the first time a doubt of his beautiful beloved entered his mind. She had listened in silence to the conversation of the two men, her manner cold, but one of watchful attention.

"Would my riches or poverty make any difference to you, Maud?"

"Of course not," she replied in a formal tone, that carried quite an opposite conviction to the meaning of her words to her jealous lover's ears.

Whatever, though, he might have burst forth with next was post-

poned by an interruption from West. "Well, Miss Vavasour, I cannot wait any longer for your father. I shall go and look for him out of doors. If I miss him, you must tell him that I should have liked to have seen him before the meeting to-morrow," he exclaimed, in the airiest style, as though quite unaware of the domestic earthquake brewing.

The door once closed upon his retreating form, Ralph Irving turned in passionate earnest to Miss Vavasour. "Maud, I insist upon your giving me a plainer reply than you did just now. As a poor man, should I not be the same in your eyes as though I had the wealth of the Indies? Answer! don't keep me in suspense!" he demanded peremptorily upon Maud's visible hesitation.

"Then I must say that I should prefer the wealth," she said at last, but she smiled up at him archly, and shot forth a soft ray from her beautiful eyes.

Irving saw the curve of the red lips, the glance of the tender misleading eyes; and, man-like, he half-melted.

"Do not play with me now, my darling," he said, beseechingly. "Let us speak only soberest truth."

"Love in a cottage sounds very well in a book," she cried, pettishly. "But, unhappily in real life, the cottage and the love are not all. There are also ill-cooked dinners, dowdy bonnets, a one-horse carriage, or no carriage at all, every kind of disagreeable."

Over Irving's mind rushed an uncomfortable recollection of West's phrase: "The good things that Miss Vavasour's soul loves." For a moment he was daunted by this confirmation, but, looking at that perfect face, the light and grace of which must come from a noble spirit, his faith revived.

"These things would not weigh with you against love, Maud? I know you better than you do yourself."

Hitherto Irving had been seated beside her on the sofa, but now, as she answered not a word to his last appeal, he cast himself on his knees before her, and seized her hands.

"Maud, could you not bear poverty with me, for my sake?" he cried, imploringly, while he wrung her hands hard.

He was only striving to elicit some spark from the fire of love: only trying, more and more desperately, as her silence shocked and disappointed him, to wring some word of unselfish feeling from her, but she saw in this exhibition of passionate entreaty only a realization of her worst fears.

"My hands!" she exclaimed, with a little affected cry of pain. "Do you know that you are crushing the very bones?"

He saw that she was endeavouring to temporize with him, and muttered a word that sounded very like an oath; but he freed her hands, casting them aside with a quick gesture of disdain. When, though, they lay free upon her lap, and he saw marks of the pressure of his fingers on her tender flesh, he was struck with remorse; and

gathering her hands once more into his clasp, he bent his lips upon them in gentlest kisses of reparation.

Miss Vavasour tried uncomfortably to disengage the useful members, which seemed in immediate danger of being swallowed: she also trembled uncontrollably; for, however much one may regard a proposition from a pauper to share his poverty with him as the suggestion of a lunatic, the task of informing him of the view taken of his scheme is not a pleasant one, when the pauper displays this kind of paroxysm of devotion.

"What do you want to say, Mr. Irving?"

The formal title! and those cold tones! With a curious shock Irving dropped her hands, and, from his place on his knees before her, he looked up into her face with an intent gaze.

"I only asked you," Ralph said in measured accents, and still regarding her steadfastly, "whether my poverty or wealth would make any difference to you?"

Miss Vavasour quailed visibly under that earnest look, which seemed as though it must pierce to the innermost recesses of her flimsy heart; but she replied, pouting, "As a sensible woman, can you expect me to answer, No."

"As a true woman, I should expect you to answer, No," was his stern retort.

"Then I suppose," she said pettishly, "I am not a true woman, for I could not say it."

"You mean that?" he inquired, rising to his feet.

"Of course I mean it," she answered, gathering courage and boldness.

"Then hear me! I thank heaven that I have found out before too late the worldly nature of the woman whom in all the earth I thought most worthy of reverence. Some misconception seems to have arisen; but mind, I never misled you, for I never doubted you: I should as soon have doubted the purity of an angel as yours!" he cried reproachfully. "To tear you from my heart now is as the very bitterness of death to me," he added in tones that thrilled with his anguish: "but to have found out too late the calculating coldness of your character; to have been discovering day after day the shallow soul, the callous heart of the woman whom I should have sworn to love and trust—this would have been torture intolerable, unendurable indeed. Farewell—never of my own choice will I again look upon your face."

IV.

In thus speaking to Miss Vavasour and for ever parting themselves, Irving only acted in strict obedience to the law of his nature. His trust betrayed, his faith broken, his action was all the more sudden, his condemnation the more sweeping for his previous blind reverence.

"I must be off again early in the morning," said he to George West, just as they were on the point of separating for the night.

"Ah! you are wanted again in town," said his host, expressing no surprise, raising no difficulties. He had marked his guest's gloomy face and abstracted manner during dinner, and had drawn his own conclusions.

"I am going up to town at all events," said Irving.

"Well, we must be content to spare you," said West cheerily. "Always glad to see you, recollect."

"All right, old fellow; I know it," said Irving. Then exchanging a warmer, more lingering hand-pressure than usual, they parted—understanding one another as well and as assured of sympathy as two women would have been after bushels of sentimental talk.

It was very long before the Wests saw Ralph again: he came down to Fleckford no more. Great alterations and improvements had been projected at the Abbey; and an army of decorators and painters duly made their appearance, and took possession there. But the owner seemed to take only a very lukewarm interest in the work in progress. If he visited the place at all, it was but for a very brief period of time; when, too, no one in the neighbourhood saw him.

During, however, the next season, for which the Wests came to town, Irving was a constant inmate of their house; and was soon as unfailing an attendant upon Adela as her own shadow. Upon the opening day of the Royal Academy they were present together, as everywhere; Irving enjoying the pictures twice over, first in their own beauty, and secondly in the girl's intelligent enthusiasm. They had almost done the circuit of the rooms, when Adela made the discovery that no less a person was there, and at no great distance from them, than Miss Vavasour. They must eventually come face to face with her she saw; and the next moment was conscious that Ralph also had perceived her presence. But, faultlessly handsome as ever, exquisitely dressed though she were, Maud Vavasour had no longer any attraction for him: in the interval that elapsed before the proud beauty was aware of his approach, Irving had time for a short study of her, and there was that in the disdainful coldness of her features, in her listless weary expression, which repulsed him, completing his cure, and convincing him that Maud was not happy herself, nor calculated to make any man so.

Maud Vavasour was not the woman to overlook or forget words such as Ralph Irving had addressed to her; but she vouchsafed a haughty inclination of her head as he and Miss West passed.

Adela, by an uncontrollable impulse, gave a glance up into Irving's face, which he saw and met with his own gaze: the blood had before that burned somewhat warmly in his cheeks at the unexpected and ill-timed rencounter with Miss Vavasour; but upon seeing the concern and sympathy depicted upon Adela's transparent countenance, he felt more inclined to smile.

"Are you afraid that I am scorched, burnt-up, annihilated?" he inquired of Adela, his laughing eyes still bent frankly upon hers.

She blushed deeply at this translation of her thoughts, and turned her head away.

"My foolish little darling! Do you suppose that she has any power over me? Do you not know that one thread of your golden hair, one touch of your hand, is more priceless to me than anything or anybody else in the wide world?" he whispered, trying to catch a glimpse of her face. But he neither succeeded in that, nor in extracting a reply from her.

"Adela, speak to me, or I shall go down on my knees to you on the spot; and you must be aware that the scene is not suitable for the enterprise."

Silence still on the part of his companion.

"Adela, I declare I shall plunge down in another moment."

In genuine horror then at the seriousness of his tone, she looked round to prevent the carrying out of this proposition.

"Do not be absurd!" she said only: but Irving read all he wanted to know in the happy glowing face, in the blue eyes raised beseechingly to his.

"Very well. Then now that we have examined all these daubs," he said, indicating the productions on the walls, "I will show you the masterpiece of the exhibition: my picture."

"Have you a picture here?" she asked, in surprise and curiosity.

"Yes," he said. "There it is."

Miss West found the number he gave, and beheld—a wonderfully vivid portrait of Maud Vavasour! It was the fateful picture which had already wrought so much. Adela gazed in silence upon the imaged beauty of her rival for a few minutes, and then moved away without uttering a word.

"You are not very encouraging to a young artist," said Irving.

The woman and the critic both upon that spoke. "Love inspired you when you painted that likeness: you must have loved her very much, and must care for her still," said the girl, bravely; but her face was white with pain.

"You are in part right," he answered. "It is true that I worked at that picture under the inspiration of a grand passion, a feverish caprice; but not of love. I loved you, you only, from my first acquaintance with you, although a headlong fancy beguiled me for a time. I confess my folly, and very humbly entreat your forgiveness. Dearest, will you not pardon that brief disloyalty?"

And Adela West, being a woman lamentably deficient in spirit, but full of all sweet and tender virtues, answered—"Yes."

CHANCE.

(Before a Lottery in Madrid.)

INTO the sea the sun drops down,
The night comes quickly after,
A cool sea-breeze awakes the town,
Refreshed, to life and laughter ;
And clear young voices rise and fall
In tune along the city wall.

Here are sweet gardens dusk, and deep
Cool shadows and green places ;
And little grots where fountains sleep,
Watched by white nymphs and graces,
Whose marble hands protect with care
Their treasure from the summer glare

Ah ! Donna Inez—well I know
The plane-tree's gracious shading
The fan's soft flutter to and fro,
The dark eyes that are waiting.
To-night we two must hold apart
Lest you should search and read my heart.

From your bright looks I could not ceep
What chance the morrow carries,
Life, fortune, or a dreamless sleep
Lulled by the Manzanares ;
Whose rocky channel well may hide
My secret in its turbid tide.

Black letters on a slip of white,
A meaningless blank number,
I chose it, for in dreams last night
Its sequence broke my slumber ;
And my last duro went to-day—
On what ? the last act of the play !

Although no moon has risen as yet,
No stars are lit in heaven,
I see the numbers duly set,
9, 8, 5, 4, 6, 7.
Chance ! chance ! befriend me ! who have
Save this hope left beneath the sun.

To-morrow, if I live to take
That white rose from your tresses,
What I have chanced for your dear sake,
Will pass your wildest guesses.
And, Inez, I shall tell you, never,
How near I was to that dark river !

G. B. STUART

J. SWAIN

THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXXI.

AFTER MANY YEARS.

IT is the height of the London season, and a beautiful day in early summer.

Carriages are setting down their well-dressed freights at the house of Lord Essington, in Berkeley Square: not many carriages; one, now and again, at intervals. It is Thursday; and on Thursday afternoons Lady Essington is always "at home:" and those friends of hers in the great world who remember this, and have time to call, come and do so.

Lady Essington—looking quite an elderly woman now, for many years have elapsed since you saw her last, reader—sits on a sofa in the drawing-room, underneath one of the windows. She wears black silk and crape and a widow's cap. For alas, the good-natured earl, her husband, so kind to all the world, high and low, so genial and so unpretending, has been dead more than twelve months now, and his only son, the Viscount Cardine, is the present earl. The new earl is not married; therefore his mother looks upon this house as her own still; she has made no move to go out of it: it has never occurred to the mind of Lord Essington, her son, to suggest that she should. He is easy and careless; indifferent to most things, except his own pursuits.

Lady Geraldine Hetley stands near the door, welcoming with effusion three middle-aged sisters just coming in, for they have an old bachelor brother who is very rich; and poor Geraldine, though getting towards forty, has not yet given up all hope of being asked to

share somebody's name and fortune. Her hair is thin, her face has acquired a permanently cross expression: the result of indulging habitual ill-temper.

In a corner of the room stands the tea-table; a white cloth, cups and saucers, biscuits and cake are upon it. Behind the table, ready to dispense its favours, sits a graceful girl of middle height, her face one of the sweetest ever looked upon. Her dress is of simple material: a white muslin ground with small lilac sprigs upon it, worked in tambour stitch; ribbons of the same colour fall back from her soft brown hair. Her eyes are brown and soft also; earnest eyes that all the world might trust. Her features, clearly cut, are of the highest type of beauty; the delicate colour on her cheeks is of a soft damask rose.

"What are you about?" asks Geraldine, approaching her with a cross whisper. "Why don't you pour out some tea?"

"I am waiting for four o'clock to strike," was the gentle answer. "Lady Essington said I was not to begin before."

"Nonsense," sharply responded Geraldine. "People want some."

A momentary lull in the hum of the room, which was getting well filled now, broken only by the slight click of cups and saucers, when the groom of the chambers opened the door to make a fresh announcement.

"Miss Pomeroy."

Greeting Geraldine on her way, Joan spoke a little with Lady Essington, and then found a seat for herself beyond the tea-table. Joan looked taller and sterner and darker than of yore: years seldom soften plain women into pretty ones. Joan was passing through London on her way to Pomeroy, and had come by invitation to remain this afternoon and to dine. She had leisure, sitting in that quiet corner, to look about her, and was doing so when she found herself addressed.

"Will you take some tea?"

It was the sweetest voice Joan had ever heard. Looking at the speaker, standing there before her, the cup of tea held out, she thought it the sweetest face she had ever seen. Mechanically Joan took the tea, a little lost in surprise.

"Not any cake, thank you. You—you are not Lucy Blake?"

"Oh no," was the smiling answer. "But I think Lucy will be here presently; Lady Lucy said she should come herself, and bring her."

Joan wondered whom she could be—this most lovely girl who seemed to be domiciled with the Essingtons. When Geraldine sat down by her, to take some tea on her own account, it gave Joan the opportunity of asking.

"Would you not like to take your bonnet off at once, Miss Pomeroy?"

"Thank you; presently. Who is that beautiful girl?"

Geraldine looked round the room, anywhere but at the tea-table. "Which girl?" she asked.

"Here: close by. Handing some tea, just now, to that French count."

"Oh—she," slightingly spoke Geraldine. "It is Frank Hetley's eldest girl—Annaline."

"To be sure; I might have known it," cried Joan, with sudden remembrance. "She has just the same sweet frank face that she had as a child. Is she staying with you?"

"I am sorry to say she is. Mamma *would* bring her back with us from Florence, though I told her how it would be—that we should want to get rid of her when we could not. She thought Annaline might be useful to us here during the season. Of course we make her *that;* but mamma would like to get her out of the house now, and we don't know how to do it."

"Why do you wish it?"

"She has turned out to be the most crafty, deceitful, designing minx possible: will be the ruin of the family if we don't take care. She is plotting for it."

Fresh arrivals carried Geraldine away to her duties, leaving Miss Pomeroy somewhat puzzled. If she were a reader of countenances, the young lady in question was anything but crafty or deceitful. A few minutes more, and, quite incidentally, she got a little enlighten ment from Lady Essington, upon whose sofa Joan had then found room. It came through Joan's asking after the earl.

"Edmund?—oh, he is very well," responded Lady Essington, in a tart tone, as though the mention of her son's name displeased her. "I wonder he is not here this afternoon. I'm sure, be where we will now, he is at our tail."

"And do you not like him to be?" asked Joan, remembering that in the days gone by the young man had erred on the other side—that of roaming.

"Not when he is attracted to us by a pretentious upstart of a girl, who would like to draw him into an engagement," said the countess. "Oh yes; I daresay you know who it is I am speaking of—that little chit opposite, Annaline Hetley. I brought her home with us from Florence quite out of compassion, for her father and mother are poorer than ever, have much ado to make a living of it, now my husband and his foolish help are gone. They were glad to let her come. I made a half promise that I would get the girl presented and stand the cost of a plain white silk dress for it. Will though!"

"What has she done?"

"What has she not done—cajoling Edmund by every trick and turn—practising her wiles upon him morning, noon, and night!" retorted the angry countess. "I declare to you we are beginning to fear Edmund may forget himself, and take a step that can never be

redeemed. Fancy what our feelings would be, at seeing *her* his wife. I suppose you don't happen to know of any friend about to travel to Florence, Miss Pomeroy? I wish I could hear of somebody going who would take charge of her. I should be thankful to pack her off to-day."

"Mamma, you are so engrossed with your wrongs that you cannot see and hear me," cried a pretty, laughing woman, who had been waiting to speak. Joan shook hands with her warmly. It was Lady Lucy Blake, once Lucy Hetley. The reader may remember her as having been with the young Lady of Pomeroy when they discovered the stains of blood on the wedding-dress. By her side stood her daughter Lucy, who had been presented only two days ago.

"What treason has mamma been whispering to you about that poor child Annaline?" asked Lady Lucy, taking the seat which her mother quitted to pay attention elsewhere. "That she is designing and wary and wicked, I suppose? Don't believe a word of it, Miss Pomeroy. The girl is as simple-minded, true-hearted a girl as ever lived. She always was, and she always will be."

"I confess she looks so," remarked Joan.

"She *is* so. It is too bad of mamma and Geraldine. Very wrong indeed of them. Because Edmund has fallen in love with Annaline, and persecutes her with his attentions, they heap blame upon her. I don't believe she likes him—or would have him. I and Colonel Blake go to Ireland next week, and I declare I would carry her with me out of it all, only that the little ones at home have had a slight attack of scarlatina. You are going down to Pomeroy, I hear?"

"Yes; to-morrow," said Joan.

"How is Mrs. Pomeroy? Is she still at the abbey?"

"Oh, yes. She is quite well, I believe."

"Do they still see ghosts there?" laughingly rejoined Lady Lucy. But she repented of the thoughtless jest when she saw the flush of pain it brought to Joan's pale face.

"*They* were laid with my poor brother, Guy," Joan answered, gravely. "The superstition was all buried with him."

"I beg your pardon," frankly spoke Lady Lucy, putting her hand affectionately upon Joan's.

"Go with Miss Pomeroy up stairs, Annaline," imperiously spoke Geraldine later, when she seemed no longer needed at the tea-table. "She would like to take her bonnet off."

In her unobtrusive, gentle way, Annaline helped Joan to make her brief toilette. It was quite evident that her life had been spent in being useful to other people.

"Thank you, my dear," said Joan, taking her hand when it was over. "I am sure you have a kind heart."

Annaline blushed. It was not often that praise was accorded to *her*.

"Are you very happy here?"

Tears rose with the suddenness of the question.

"I should like you to tell me all, as you would tell it to your mother, child. Perhaps I may be of some use to you. Things are not very smooth for you here, I gather."

"Not very," answered Annaline, her voice unsteady.

"Lord Essington loves you, does he not?" pursued Joan, going to the root at once, in her straightforward way. "Do you love him?"

"I do not even like him," said Annaline. "I *could* not love him; I *could* not marry him. I have tried to let him see this all along, and have kept out of his way when possible. Lady Essington must have seen this, and yet—and yet—they are so angry with me."

She broke down with a burst of tears. That every word was truth, Joan could see.

"Lord Essington spoke to me this morning; he took the opportunity when they were up stairs with the dressmaker. I told him then it was quite *impossible*, and I begged him to let me alone in future."

"Did he ask you to be his wife?"

"Yes," faltered Annaline.

"Well, my dear, it would be a very advantageous marriage for you. And I think Lord Essington might make a good husband, wild though he has been in his day. It is time he settled down."

"Quite time, if he is to settle at all; he is forty years old," acquiesced Annaline. "But I would not be his wife for the world."

"Perhaps you like some one else?"

And evidently, though Joan had but spoken carelessly, Annaline did like some one else. She turned away to hide her embarrassment.

"Who is it, my dear? Are you likely to marry him?"

"Oh, it is no one; no one, indeed, Miss Pomeroy." she earnestly said, the blushes dying away in tears. "I do assure you I am not likely to marry; perhaps I never shall. There's no chance of it. I —I wish," she continued, in a timid, deprecating tone, "that I could hear of something to do."

"Something to do?"

"I cannot continue to stay here; it is most uncomfortable, and they want me gone. And poor mamma can do without me at home; she has Mary and Clarice. If I could do something for myself! Be a governess—or anything of that."

Joan paused. "To relieve them at home, you mean?"

"Yes. We are so many: three girls and four boys; besides Frank, who has got his commission, and is away. The boys are the youngest; and they all have to be educated, you know, Miss Pomeroy. And papa has so little to do it with. My education has

been thoroughly good. Surely it would be no harm to make use of it?"

"That would be for your parents' consideration, my dear."

"I think they would be glad," whispered Annaline. "At least, mamma would; she and I have talked of it sometimes. Grandpapa, her father, was not at all rich, and she might have gone out as governess herself, had she not married. Indeed, I cannot stay in this house. I think it would give me nervous fever."

"Miss Hetley is wanted in the drawing-room," said a woman servant, putting in her head at this juncture. "My lady wishes to know what she means by absenting herself."

"Miss Hetley has been detained by me," spoke Joan, in her haughtiest manner. "Have the goodness to tell your lady that I, Miss Pomeroy, say so."

Lord Essington came home to dinner: a talkative man, with fat cheeks, a light moustache, and a bald head. He sought occasional opportunities of whispering to Annaline during the evening, and Joan felt sure he had not accepted his refusal.

Not less picturesque than of yore, with its Gothic casements and grey walls, covered in places with their green moss, looked the old abbey of Pomeroy, as Joan approached it in the twilight of the summer's evening. She generally visited it once a year, often remaining for several months, for she and the Lady of Pomeroy were closer friends than ever.

Many years had elapsed since the death—the real death—of Guy. They had been curiously uneventful, compared with the troublous years of excitement that had preceded them. Save for the gradually increasing growth of the two children—the young lord and Mary—the time appeared to have had nothing to mark its passing. The noble lad of those past days, the self-willed, precocious little girl, were now man and woman.

Upon the death of Guy, which cleared up all the mystery, set straight what had been crooked, things were reorganized in their proper order. The young lord was the indisputable lord from henceforth, and his mother assumed the state and duties of the reigning lady. She retained the south wing, in which she had previously dwelt, but she also occupied, in addition, the whole of the front pile, and took upon herself the vast household hitherto deemed essential to the Lords of Pomeroy. Mrs. Pomeroy and her daughter moved into the north wing: it had been their abode since then. Not but that Mary continued to make herself at home in the abbey, just as if the whole of it were her especial property. Leolin had at once applied to be readmitted into the diplomatic service of his country; he was appointed to a post on the continent, and there took up his abode with his wife.

One change the Lady of Pomeroy had hastened to make, and

that was connected with the west wing. "Do it as soon as I am gone, Sybilla," Guy had said to her in dying; "let the haunted rooms be renovated and made into cheerful, useful habitations." The nun's ghost itself would not have known that west wing now. The subterranean passage from the keep had been blocked up at either end with good bricks and mortar. No more ghostly surprises should occur if Sybilla could hinder them. A handsome entrance to the west wing was made from the quadrangle, and a smaller one from the south wing. Windows, large, wide, sun-admitting, looking to the open country, were inserted into the dull dead walls that once had been, and the rooms they lighted were made bright with modern decorations and furniture. The lady judged rightly, no doubt, in making that tabooed wing the most cheerful wing of all. When her son married, that should be his children's nursery, she said.

Least of all would you have recognized the haunted tower. It was converted into an observatory for Rupert, the young lord having evinced a strong propensity for star-gazing. And Miss Pomeroy had begged that the nun's picture should not be destroyed, but placed in her own bed-chamber, the one which had always been hers at the abbey and always would be. Poor Joan had perforce felt compelled to give up many of the superstitions which had been so dear to her belief and heart; but she liked to recall the past stories and to retain their mementoes. All these changes and renovations were long ago past; the abbey had almost forgotten that the west wing was ever gloomy, ever dreaded.

The carriage, containing Joan, drew up at the gateway, and she found the Lady of Pomeroy standing in the hall to receive her. Time had worn better with Sybilla than with Joan: she was still the same nobly-beautiful woman that she had ever been. No one throughout the county was more respected than she; more sought after, more beloved.

"I am so glad to have you again, Joan! I began to think you were lost."

"We got in an hour and a half behind time," said Joan, as they entered the lady's favourite sitting-room. "Some accident had occurred to a train on the line, and we could not get by. I hope you have not waited dinner."

"Of course I have. Do you think I could ——"

"How do you do, Aunt Joan?"

With very much of the same self-assertion of manner that had characterised her childhood, Mary Pomeroy entered. She was one-and-twenty now, and a beautiful girl, upright and stately, but not tall. Very beautiful she looks this evening in her low dress of pale blue silk, a gold chain and cross lying on her neck. She is not much like Guy, except that she has his eyes; not much like her mother. Her hair is of a light brown shade, her features are faultless, and the colour on her cheeks may be

likened to a delicate shade of vermillion, rather than of rose. Mary had been educated at the convent, only leaving it when she was nineteen, and then with reluctance. She was wont to say, in her peculiarly non-reticent fashion, that, had fate not marked her out to be the Lady of Pomeroy, she would have liked to stay at the convent for life. Last year she had gone to London to make her obeisance to the Queen, and had remained for a few weeks with her aunt, Mrs. Capel, who presented her. Mary and her mother did not yet get on entirely well together: the girl was too daringly independent, too fond of carrying out her own will, as she had been when a child. Mrs. Pomeroy led a most retired life, and that did not suit Mary. She had become what the French call dévote, was fond of chapel, penances, prayers, and fastings. Mary did not like it at all; there was too much of it, she boldly told her mother; and she escaped frequently to her aunt the Lady of Pomeroy, by whom she was taken about on visits.

"I have come to dine with you, Aunt Sybilla."

"Surely, my love. I wished to persuade your mother to come."

"As if you could do that! This is one of mamma's self-imposed fasts, Aunt Joan. You don't know what a dévote she is now."

"But that is what you ought not to say, Mary," admonished Joan, who by no means always approved of Miss Mary. "I fear you try your mamma."

"Mamma tries me," corrected the young lady. "'You must not do this, Mary; you must not do that,' she says. You don't know what it is, Aunt Joan, or how fearfully dull the life I have to lead. I have no companion, not a soul to speak to, but the lady here. I am not sure but it would be best to run away."

"Where should you run to?" grimly asked Joan.

"Anywhere. I *shall* too—unless Rupert speedily comes home."

"What news have you from Rupert?" questioned Joan of the lady. "Is he still abroad?"

"Yes, still abroad," answered Sybilla with a suppressed sigh. "The last letter I had from him, was dated Vienna.—But, Joan, you had better prepare for dinner."

The young Lord of Pomeroy had been away from home for six years now, on and off: paying only flying visits to it between whiles. At first, in pursuance of his college education; later, for his own pleasure. When he became of age he stayed for a month or two in London, was presented to his Sovereign and her Royal Consort, and made acquaintance with people of his own degree, old friends of the Pomeroys. Afterwards he had gone abroad on a visit to his Uncle Leolin and Lady Anna, and—he was abroad still.

Sybilla had expected him back long ago. On the return of each Christmas-tide, she had thought that he would certainly spend it with her: and she had found herself mistaken. Rupert wrote

frequently, most affectionate letters, in nearly all of which he *spoke* of coming home. But he did not come. The lady felt aggrieved, Mary angry; and Mrs. Pomeroy was uneasy lest the golden dreams which she still cherished for her daughter, should be imperilled.

"Mary is wilful as ever, I find," observed Joan the next day, when speaking with Mrs. Pomeroy.

"She is more so," sighed Mrs. Pomeroy. "I know not what to do with her; I am perpetually haunted by fears that she will outrage custom and propriety by some intolerable act. She will gallop off to the convent alone, without even a groom behind her, and gallop back again after dark. Dear sister Mildred—now the Lady Abbess, as no doubt you have heard—is perfectly scandalised; but all she can say to Mary makes no impression."

"Mary complains that she is dull here," observed Joan.

"She is so. How can I help that? The lady takes her out, but she does not visit much during this absence of Rupert's—an absence which appears to me, Joan, to be curiously prolonged. I can see that Mary is resenting it in her heart; it makes her more restless than she would be."

"Mary always seemed to think the world was made for her own gratification. Why should she allow Rupert's movements to trouble her?"

"Why should she not?" retorted Mrs. Pomeroy, but her low voice was not raised or her subdued manner lifted. "She is to be his wife, I suppose."

"Are you cherishing that idea?"

"Certainly. Have you anything to urge against it, Joan?"

"I have not. I should like to see her, poor Guy's child, Lady of Pomeroy. A dispensation would have to be sought, I expect; they are cousins ——"

"That is easily obtained."

"But," continued Joan, unmindful of the interruption, "I cannot help remembering that another may object to it, whose will in the matter is of more consequence than mine—Rupert himself. When young men go out into the world, they sometimes forget home likings and home ties."

The very thought that was beginning to render uneasy Mrs. Pomeroy. "It has occurred to me lately that I might take a companion for Mary," she resumed, quitting the other subject: "a young gentlewoman of her own age, who would share her pursuits. I feel nearly sure it would answer. What do you think of it? I wish I knew where to look for one who would be suitable for the post."

A companion—a young gentlewoman, of Mary's own age. Over Joan's mind came rushing the image of Annaline Hetley. She might serve *both* the girls by bringing her here.

"I know of one," she answered, rather impulsively, "and I do think it would be a good thing for Mary. Yes: if you approve, Mrs. Pomeroy, we will write for her to-day."

CHAPTER XXXII.

NAOMI'S REVELATION.

THE two young ladies stood gazing at one another. Mary, all impulse, had seized upon the notion presented to her of a companion; and Annaline Hetley had come down without delay. The young stranger stood, meek and timid, before Mrs. Pomeroy, her sweet face blushing, her anxious mind uneasy lest she should be disapproved. Joan Pomeroy had said, and with truth, that Mary had always appeared to think the world was made for her special gratification: poor Annaline felt grateful to obtain the smallest possible corner in it.

"I shall like you very much," cried Mary, in her outspoken fashion. "My aunt Joan said you were pretty, and good, and nice; but I did not picture you so pretty and nice as this. Will you stay with me always?"

"Yes—if you wish it—if you can let me be of use to you," answered Annaline, grateful almost to tears at the warmth of her welcome.

Impulsive, good-hearted, proud, self-asserting, generous: Mary had all these and other, contradictory, qualities. On the first day of Annaline's arrival, she could not make enough of her. They played duets together, they sat side by side at dinner, they wandered in the garden in the evening sunset, they talked of their past experiences; Mary freely, Annaline so far as she dared, for she did not yet feel at home at Pomeroy. Annaline's past appeared to have lain in hard work: in lessons and close study, in useful sewing, in helping her mother with the younger children, in patiently sitting by anyone's side who was sick. Mary's experiences seemed to lie in exercising her own will and pleasure, in having swayed the world around her, including Pomeroy, in small power of all kinds, in revelling in indulgence.

"But you could not have quite your own way in the convent," thoughtfully observed Annaline, as they resumed the conversation the following day.

"I had it very greatly—more than the other girls would have thought of hoping for," said Mary. And she was right. The convent had begun by petting, loving, and indulging the self-willed little girl, and the convent found it had to continue to do it. The Pomeroys were the chief patrons and benefactors of the convent, and this pretty plaything was the child of one of the Pomeroy lords.

"Eight years you were there, only coming to the abbey for Sundays

and sometimes for the holidays!" repeated Annaline. "It must have been like a home. Were you not sorry to leave it?"

Mary nodded. "I never would have left it but that I am to be Lady of Pomeroy."

The colour suddenly rose and fell on Annaline's transparent cheeks. Some emotion stirred her. Mary went on, not having observed it.

"When the time came for me to quit the convent, and I found how much it would cost me, and saw how truly happy I had been there, I hesitated. I did indeed. I think I was the best part of an hour making up my mind whether I should stay on, or not. But, though it cost me something to give it up, it would have cost me more to give up the Lord of Pomeroy. As his wife, you know, I shall sway the world: so much of it as lies around us."

"Yes," replied Annaline, in a faint tone, feeling that a reply was expected from her.

"I will drive you to the convent this afternoon," added Mary. "Grandmamma will think I should take you first of all to her, but she must wait. We shall have to be back in time for dinner at seven. We dine with the lady, you know. I think she invited us purposely: because it is one of mamma's impromptu starving days."

Accordingly in the afternoon the young ladies started for the convent in Mary's pony carriage. They were back about six, and hastened to dress. Both came down in white silk. Mary's was new and costly; Annaline's a turned gown that had been given her by Lady Anna: but it looked fresh and dainty, and the girls themselves were beautiful.

"How lovely you look!" said Mary, regarding her critically. "You shall be my best friend always, Annaline; as my sister."

Passing through the cloisters, they gained the archway and entered the fine old hall. Very much to Mary's surprise there stood in the hall the Lady of Pomeroy, Joan by her side, and behind them a formidable array of the upper servants; all wearing an aspect of expectation.

"What's to do now?" cried Mary. "Are you ceremoniously assembled here to welcome *us*, Aunt Sybilla? Very attentive of you, I must say."

"Hush, Mary, my dear; it is Rupert that we are about to welcome. My son Rupert. His carriage is now coming up the sweep. Listen!"

It was even so. After his long absence, Rupert was returning with no more notice than this. Half an hour ago his mother had received an avant courier from Owlstone to say he was on his way.

The carriage thunders in at the gateway and stops. Throw wide the entrance. Cox, the custodian and chief retainer of the abbey, walks in with the air of a royal marshal, making his announcement.

"The Lord of Pomeroy"

And with far less of pretence comes in Rupert after him. But he

looks a lord: ay, and the Lord of Pomeroy. Right noble, stately, grand as any Lord of Pomeroy that ever preceded him; with the high, finely-carved features of his ancestors, with his own wonderful violet eyes and their sweet expression.

To his mother first; and it seems that she will never release him. Aunt Joan claims the next embrace. Then he turns, looking half dazzled with the sea of faces; sees Mary, and is advancing to her, when his eye suddenly catches the blushing face of Annaline Hetley.

As if it were some joyous sight that unexpectedly opens upon him, Rupert turns to her, neglecting Mary, his countenance overspread with a sudden radiance, his hands outstretched. He takes both her hands in his, and speaks in a soft glad whisper.

"Annaline! I did not expect to see you here. This is a surprise."

Her own face has turned white as a lily. She withdraws her hands from his, shrinking from the notice they are attracting, and falls into the background behind anyone whose robes will shield her. Rupert appears to recollect himself, and looks round at others.

"You have forgotten *me!*"

The words, spoken in a tone of haughty pain, come from Mary Pomeroy. Rupert gazes at her for a half second, and then takes her hands as he had taken Annaline's.

"It is really you, Mary! With so many dear faces of welcome, I feel bewildered."

The servants come next; and then Rupert conducts his mother up stairs. Later, they sit down to the banquet. A grand banquet, to-night, held in the state banqueting hall, hastily made in honour of the lord's arrival. Father Andrew, jovial as ever in his increasing years, says grace, but Mrs. Pomeroy has declined to appear. She does not allow any pleasure, no matter what may be the temptation, to interfere with these, her days of penance.

"You have come home to stay?" asks Father Andrew of the lord.

"I hope so. For good."

"That's well. The lady has missed you sadly."

"I am sure she has," replies Rupert, with a loving glance at his mother. "But," he adds, as if in apology to her, "it was better for me to remain and get all my rovings over, than to come home unsatisfied, wanting to go back again. My home will be my home now: so far as I believe, I shall not care to quit it."

"And I retract the words I spoke to you. And I am ashamed of myself for having been beguiled into speaking them to one so deceitful. *My friend*, I called you; my friend henceforth for life. I would rather make a friend of a serpent than of you!"

With all the cold, haughty, repelling scorn that the Pomeroys could put on at will, stood Mary Pomeroy as she spoke the above

denouncement to Annaline. It was the morning of the day following the young lord's arrival, and after breakfast. Annaline was seated quietly in the red room, copying some music, when Mary Pomeroy entered, and began to reproach her.

"Indeed, indeed, I am not deceitful," pleaded Annaline, the tears of dismay filling her eyes as she rose from her seat. "I try to be true always."

"Very *true*, was it not, to pretend to me you did not know the Lord of Pomeroy," sarcastically rejoined Mary. "When you and he met each other yesterday as if you were on terms of the deepest intimacy—hand clasping hand! If there be one vice we Pomeroys despise above all other vices, it is deceit."

"Oh, pray forgive me!—pray remember!" shivered Annaline. "I did not *pretend*. I did not say anything. I never mentioned the Lord of Pomeroy."

"*I* mentioned him," flashed Mary. "I spoke of him a hundred times yesterday, and you did not respond. You appeared not to know him; tacitly let me think that he was a stranger to you: you made me believe so. If you call not that deceit, what do you call it."

"I did not like to say I knew him. Had you only asked me whether I knew him, I should have told you all. I meant to tell you when I was a little less of a stranger here; I should have liked to tell the lady that I knew her son."

Mary threw back her head. "You cannot excuse yourself to *me*; we Pomeroys are accustomed to straightforward dealing. Pray when and where did you meet the Lord of Pomeroy?"

"Last year at Leolin Pomeroy's," explained Annaline. "Lady Anna invited me to Vienna, and I was staying with them when he came. Afterwards, when I was back at home, he came to Florence."

"Did he stay long?"

"Yes, for he fell into some trouble, and ——"

Mary's dark grey eyes were shooting forth their anger. "Fell into trouble? The Lord of Pomeroy! How dare you presume to traduce him?"

"It is true," meekly urged Annaline. "It was not wicked trouble, only political. Some friends of his were staying in Florence, and he was drawn into it by them. The authorities wanted to proceed against him: he was of high degree and his friends were not; not worth meddling with: papa had to exercise his best diplomacy to prevent it. It took a great deal of time, and of money, too, to put it right: money of the lord's."

"And your people were intimate with him during the process?"

"Yes. For two weeks of it he was in our house. Papa would not let him show himself abroad: he might have been taken. That would have complicated the matter greatly: perhaps have taken it altogether beyond papa's hands."

"I should like to hear what this great bugbear was from Rupert

himself. And to *you*, I presume, was assigned the task of entertaining him?"

Not throughout the interview had so disagreeable a tone been assumed by Mary as now. A swift, painful blush, at what it seemed to imply, swept over Annaline's face.

"It was mamma who entertained him, I suppose—if he wanted special entertainment. I was not at home."

"Oh."

"Our house at Florence is small; to accommodate the Lord of Pomeroy, I and Mary had to give up our room, so we went for those two weeks to stay with some friends who live at Leghorn."

"All the same, you have been well acquainted with the Lord of Pomeroy. And you could come here to his home, to his own family, and not acknowledge it. Very honourable conduct indeed, Miss Hetley."

Mary swept from the room. Annaline sighed as she sat down to her copying again. To what use reiterate her assertion that she had neither intended nor thought of deceit? In truth, she had been too timid, too shy to avow the acquaintanceship with the Lord of Pomeroy, unless special opportunity had been afforded her: and that had not occurred, for no one had talked of him to her. Annaline had been kept in the background all her life, and during her stay at Lady Essington's had been so put down that she could not possibly assert herself. Any information asked for she freely gave, but she could offer none.

Her tears falling, her fingers busy with their task, she was interrupted by the Lord of Pomeroy, who had come in to pay a visit to the north wing.

"Where are they all?" he cried, gaily.

"Mrs. Pomeroy is not yet home from chapel I think," replied Annaline, surreptitiously wiping away the tears.

"What are you crying for, Annaline?" he asked, coming forward to seat himself at the opposite side of the table.

"Not much," she answered. "It is nothing."

"Thinking of home, I suppose. How came you to leave Berkeley Square so suddenly?"

"I—was not very happy there. And when Miss Joan wrote to say I might come here as companion, I was glad to start at once."

"Nobody is happy at Lady Essington's, that I ever heard of," remarked the young lord. "I was surprised, though, Annaline, when I called there on Tuesday night and found you gone."

"Did they not tell you I was here?"

"No. Geraldine would not tell me anything—except that you had been very wicked indeed in Berkeley Square, and Aunt Joan had come to the rescue by sending you somewhere else. I thought the shortest way would be to come down and ask Aunt Joan where the 'somewhere else' was, little thinking what my reward would be."

"Did you want to know?" she asked, bending her face over the copying. "Why should you?"

"I did want to know. Though I don't think I can tell you 'why' to-day. About this wickedness of yours?" added Rupert, a smile lighting his eyes: "what was it? Did you steal one of Geraldine's ancient lovers from her? it must have been something of the kind, judging by her tartness. Lady Essington was gone to bed with a cold, or I should have got it all out of her."

Annaline was carefully scratching out a blot that her trembling pen had made, and did not answer.

"Had Essington anything to do with it? Come, confess to me!"

A startled glance went upwards from her eyes. His tone was significant. Had Geraldine betrayed *that?*

"Have you seen papa and mamma lately?" she asked, rather hurriedly.

"I saw them all, for I took Florence on my way home. And I have some news for you."

"Yes?"

"Mary is going to reward the constancy of that young attaché who has been dying for her so long."

"Oh!" exclaimed Annaline. "You must mean Charles Seymour. I am so glad! Mary does like him."

"Seymour? Yes, that's his name. A tall, thin, near-sighted fellow."

"And papa has consented?"

"In so far as that he does not interdict it." He had had to live upon bread and cheese himself, he told Seymour, through marrying when he and his wife had nothing to marry upon: if he and Mary chose to be so foolish as to do the same, they might; but he thought they would have to make the bread suffice without the cheese."

"Dear papa! But Charles may get a rise."

"He may. I suppose my Uncle Leolin will have to look after him. What is it that you are copying so industriously?"

"One of my manuscript songs. Miss Pomeroy wished me to copy it for her."

"And now tell me what you are doing, here, at Pomeroy."

"I came to be companion to Miss Mary Pomeroy. If—if she will only put up with my poor abilities, my wish to please her, and let me see what she wants and how best to serve her, I daresay I shall get on here. It is far pleasanter than being a governess."

"Does the alternative lie between the two?"

"Yes, I fear so. I must be brave, and do my best. We are so many at home you know, and so much has to be spent on the boys."

"I see," said he in a grave tone, but nevertheless there was a dancing smile in his eyes. "And now, as you must have done enough of that work for one morning, suppose you come with me

into the grounds. I should like to show you all the dangerous places: the rocks down which you may pitch, and the lake in which a false step might drown you."

"I don't know whether I *may* go," replied Annaline, her heart beating with delight at the tempting prospect. "Mary Pomeroy might not care to go—and I do not know where she is."

And when Mrs. Pomeroy got back from her prolonged devotions, she found Annaline still copying, and the Lord of Pomeroy talking to her.

That Mary, the haughty, exclusive, proud girl, who believed all the world was made for her, including Rupert, should have looked on with flashing eye and indignant brow, when she saw another made more of by him than she was, will readily be believed, tenderly excused. Annaline Hetley was but her companion, in position infinitely beneath her, a stranger at best; and for the Lord of Pomeroy at his home-coming to turn from herself, to pay his first devoirs to the girl, savoured to her mind of almost a gratuitous insult. No wonder Mary took it to heart, little marvel that she spoke out her scorn when she found the offender alone the following morning. Smarting under the blow, nothing could have then convinced her that Miss Hetley was not a perfect mask of duplicity.

She had projected a charming ride the previous day, and described to Annaline the horse she should ride and that should be kept as her own exclusive property; a horse as pretty as the favourite one she herself rode. Of course that was at an end now. So, upon bringing her reproaches to Miss Hetley to a conclusion, Mary rode forth alone. In her independent fashion, she said nothing to anyone; asked nobody's leave to go.

The first thing she noticed, when about to mount, was that Jeffs, the lord's coachman, was there to attend her, taking the place of her own groom, Lamp. It did not please her. Not but that she liked Jeffs the better of the two, but she was just in the mood to show temper at anything and everything.

"Why are *you* here, Jeffs? Where's Lamp?"

"Lamp is bad with his rheumatics this morning, Miss Mary. He couldn't venture to ride a horse. Fact is, Miss Mary, he be getting old, a'most past his work," added Jeffs.

"Old! I don't believe Lamp's as old as you are."

"He wants just two years o' my age, Miss Mary: but he's a good twenty years older in lack o' strength. I be one o' the wiry ones; shall last out brave to a hundred, I think sometimes. Lamp's all quakes and pains, been a martyr to 'em."

That Lamp, with his "quakes and pains" could be of no use to her this morning; appeared evident. Mary mounted without saying more, and cantered off, Jeffs behind her.

She allowed her horse to take almost its own course. It was a hot morning, but Mary did not heed it; the slight breeze fanned

her face as she made for the common. Onwards towards the pine forest now rode Mary. The cottage of Naomi Rex came into view: an impulse took the young lady that she would call and ask after her. Whence do they arise, these impulses? Sometimes they are weightily fraught, either for good or for evil.

Mary reined in her horse at the gate. Bridget heard, and came out smiling. For some months past Naomi had been ailing: there was no particular disorder, Mr. Norris said; it was but the weakness of old age. She was between eighty and ninety. Her mind was partially gone; that is, she was childish at times; though at intervals clear enough. Naomi's little maid, Ann, had grown up and gone the way of other young women—got married: and Mrs. Pomeroy had spared Bridget for a time to take care of Naomi. Or, rather, Mary had: for she had proposed and settled it.

"How is she to-day, Bridget?"

"Just the same, Miss Mary. I've but now got her up. Would you not like to come in and see her?"

"I think I will. Jeffs."

"She has been rambling like anything this morning," observed Bridget, as Jeffs took the horse and Mary went into the house. "Something's been troubling her about the late lord, your poor papa, Miss Mary. I can't help fancying that she has dreams at night, and then gets moithered about 'em the next day."

Naomi was sitting at the open window, her dim eyes wandering out to the features of the landscape it looked upon: the blue sea on the right, lying calm and beautiful under the clear sky, the convent chimneys rising to the left, the conspicuous grand old abbey in front. At the first moment the old woman recognised Mary, and strove to rise on her tottering legs to drop her humble curtsey; but Mary gently pushed her down on her seat again and sat down by her.

"It's very good of our young lady, is it not, aunt, to come up to see you this hot morning."

"Very good, very good," vaguely assented Naomi, her eyes wandering again—and perhaps her mind also. Bridget, having thus settled them, whisked out to hold a gossip with Jeffs. It had been beyond Bridget's philosophy to forego *that*.

"What do you see particularly in the abbey, Naomi?" questioned Mary, perceiving that the old lady was regarding it most attentively.

"I was looking for him to come safe back," answered Naomi, in quite an awestruck whisper. "He rode forth just now. Hark! perhaps we shall hear his horse's hoofs."

"*Who* rode forth?"

"The lord."

Just at first, Mary thought she alluded to the present lord; that she had really seen Rupert ride out. But the next moment's reflection showed her the fallacy of that. Even quick and young eyes could scarcely have discerned a horseman at that distance.

And she knew that Naomi had relapsed into one of her mental wanderings.

"What good sight you must have, Naomi!" she said, laughing pleasantly. "*I* should not know the lord from here."

Naomi placed her finger upon Mary's sleeve, speaking solemnly. It became evident that she thought she was addressing Joan.

"He rode forth just now, Miss Joan; I saw him. He has gone to ask that false woman to be his wife. He couldn't go from his fate, you know, in the teeth of the Prediction; and she and her mother came and took the White House of you Pomeroys, and so—he met it. No, Guy Pomeroy could not go aside from his fate."

"It is *papa* her poor old head is running upon, not Rupert," thought Mary.

"It is said, you know, Miss Joan, that he won her by a lie: but we've never understood it, for all the Lords of Pomeroy that I have known have been true and honourable. Anyway, be it as it would, that was no just cause for her to turn upon him and disgrace herself. It disgraced you all, Miss Joan; it entailed a life-long stain on her child, sweet little Miss Mary, for the shame of her mother's folly must cling to her as long as her young life shall last."

"What does she mean?" thought Mary, her face growing painfully hot.

"And it led him to murder Rupert, you know, Miss Joan. While we took it, all those years, to be the lord that had died, and mourned for him, and put up masses for his soul, it was Rupert. The poor lord was an exile, wasting away his days in pain and sorrow, never as much as looking on the pretty face of his only child."

Wild though the words were, there seemed "method in them." Some of the things she spoke of Mary knew to be facts: her father's supposed death, for instance, when it had been Rupert's.

"Naomi," she said, her voice more timid than it had ever been, as if she dreaded the answer, "why do you imagine such things? Mamma never did anything wrong."

Naomi looked puzzled—her flow of thought was checked for the moment. She put her hand to her brow and gazed full in Mary's face.

"Your mamma, Miss Joan?—no, I don't think she did: I never heard it. Anyway, she was gone before Guy's wife brought the disgrace on him. How dared she play off her pranks with Mr. Rupert to shame the lord before us all?" added the old woman with startling vehemence. "Was it not enough honour for her that she had been made the lord's own wife? Shouldn't that have contented her, without making their names a by-word?"

"What on earth are you chattering about, Aunt Naomi?" broke in Bridget, who had returned to hear this treason, and halted at the door in temporary surprise and dismay. "Miss Mary, don't you heed her; when she sets off on her brain rambles, she invents the most outrageous stories it is possible to imagine."

"What wrong was it that mamma did, Bridget?" questioned Mary, standing up before the servant.

"Wrong that she did?—Well now!—if ever I heard the like of that?" retorted Bridget, attempting to pass the question off in a show of astonishment. But to Mary's watchful senses, alive and alert just now, the faint pause the woman had made, the slightly evasive ring in the tone, was clearly perceptible.

"What was it, I ask you, Bridget?"

"It was *nothing*, Miss Mary," spake the woman, resolutely. "There. I'm sure I don't know what aunt's head runs on half her time. Only a day or two ago, she fancied Father Andrew and Mr. Norris were up here card-playing; she did, if you'll believe me."

Mary said no more. She bade Naomi good morning, and went out with Bridget, mounted her horse, and rode slowly away. Bridget returned to read her aunt a lecture on the expediency of not allowing her tongue to run on these past matters before Miss Mary Pomeroy. "But, there, where's the good of warning you," concluded Bridget, "when you've got no more sense left than a baby."

With all the laxity in the matter of ghost stories, the indulgence of every foolish whim and wish, accorded to Miss Mary Pomeroy during childhood, one disagreeable remembrance had been sedulously kept from her—the folly wrought by Guy's wife. Not a word had ever been breathed in her ear that could tarnish, or tend to a suspicion to tarnish, her mother's fair fame. Had anyone but a poor imbecile woman, past the age of reason, hinted at it now, Mary would have flown in a passion of indignation. She could not do this with poor Naomi, and the calmness maintained had tended to keep her judgment clear. But something in the very words, in what she undoubtedly knew to be their semi-truth, had startled her; Bridget's manner also startled her; and she rode away with the dismayed conviction lying on her heart that there existed some unhappy secret which had been kept from her.

"Jeffs," she said, speaking as she often did on impulse, checking her horse for the old man to ride up, "did you know the particulars of that—that trouble—years ago—between papa and mamma, and my uncle Rupert?"

"Woe's me, I did, Miss Mary. It was known to all the world, worse luck."

"What was it about? What *was* it?"

"Eh?" cried the old coachman, his caution coming back to him—for her calm address, and its matter-of-fact tone had thrown him off his guard. "I can't tell you about that, Miss Mary."

"Nonsense. How dare you say you can't tell me anything, old Jeffs?"

Jeffs shook his old head. "There be some things we dare not speak of even at your bidding, Miss Mary, and that's one on 'em. If I was capable of talking to you of that, I should expect the late

lord, your good father, to come back out of his grave and haunt me for it—just as we'd used to fancy he came out of it to haunt us while he was alive."

Jeffs backed his horse, as much as to intimate that the colloquy had better cease, and rode soberly home after his young mistress, quite unconscious that his words had but strengthened her impression that some dark secret had been kept concealed from her. Just as oil, poured upon a raging fire, only serves to feed the flame.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ANNALINE.

A SOMEWHAT unpleasant atmosphere was setting in at Pomeroy. It had its rise in the residence there of Annaline Hetley.

That the young Lord of Pomeroy did favour this demoiselle in rather a remarkable degree was evident to all, more especially evident to the jealous observation of Mary. *She* had always been first and foremost with Rupert: she expected to be so still: and to find him dividing his attentions between her and that other pretty girl close at hand, mortified her haughty heart to the last degree. It was wrong in every way, she deemed; she, the future Lady of Pomeroy, ought not to be subjected to a rival near the throne, although that rival might be regarded by Rupert as but a pastime at best.

Mrs. Pomeroy's eyes were also open to the undesirableness of this. What if it should imperil the tempting prospect, which she had looked to as a thing assured?—the marriage of her daughter with Rupert. Once let Rupert get enthralled by the charms of this young girl, and trouble might ensue. Mrs. Pomeroy did not forget that since Rupert had arrived at years of discretion, he had never once given the slightest indication that he meant to carry out the childish talk of former days, and make Mary his wife. Mary, in her straightforwardness, alluded to it without scruple. "When I am the Lady of Pomeroy, this shall be done; I shall not allow that," she would say in the hearing of the servants. But Rupert himself had never confirmed this view by so much as a word. And to Mary, at any rate, the fear that it could or would be imperilled, had not yet presented itself; the feeling, stirring her heart, was only that natural and general dislike which one young girl has to see another usurp those favours which she has looked upon as exclusively hers.

Another, who had maintained silence as to this future prospect, was the Lady of Pomeroy. It could not be but that now and again *some* allusion should have been made to it in her presence; a random word dropped by Mary, or (perhaps a more designed one) by her mother. The lady had never responded to it. Sybilla was one of those sensible and good women who are content to leave these weighty matters in the hands of God. If these two young people chose each

other, she would give them her hearty consent and blessing : but she would not do anything to forward the scheme ; and she most certainly did not and would not prematurely encourage the hopes that were continually built upon it by Mrs. Pomeroy and her daughter. This they could not fail to see and understand. The decision would lie with Rupert, and with him alone. But Mary never glanced at the possibility that he would reject her.

She had grown up to the notion that she was to be the Lady of Pomeroy ; she, as the daughter of Guy, the deposed lord, looked upon it as a kind of right that she should be, and she cherished the prospect as a certainty. Mary would not have *schemed* for it ; her nature was too honourable for that ; and when she went to her mother and told her that she would not have Annaline Hetley in the abbey any longer, she was not prompted by any ulterior fear, but simply by the dislike she had taken to her. Thereupon, Mrs. Pomeroy, nothing loth, had intimated to that young lady that she was at liberty to leave.

Annaline Hetley sat in her bedroom, whose window looked on to a pleasant prospect ; for, in this north wing, the sleeping chambers did not all face the quadrangle. The beautiful and extensive gardens lay underneath ; up the coast rose the rocks, with the sea shimmering beyond them.

At last ! A whole week had elapsed since Annaline had anxiously looked for a letter, and here it was at last. Upon Mrs. Pomeroy's telling her, civilly and courteously, that they found the scheme of having a companion for Mary did not answer, and that she would be obliged by her quitting the abbey as soon as convenient, Annaline had written to the only refuge she knew of in England—Lady Essington's house in Berkeley Square. It was from thence she had come ; it was, she supposed, to that she must return, however much against the grain it would be to do so. She wrote a very proper letter to the countess, saying she was not required at Pomeroy, and humbly asking to be allowed to return there for a very short time, until she could hear of somewhere else to go.

For six days Lady Essington did not answer. On the seventh, this letter had come. It was written by Geraldine, and was not a favourable one. They declined to receive Annaline back again.

" We have no *room* for you," wrote Geraldine ; ' we have *visitors.* Joan Pomeroy took you (rather *arbitrarily* and *abruptly* we thought) out of our hands, and to Joan Pomeroy you must look in your present dilemma. Some friends started for the Continent last week ; they would have taken charge of you to Florence : that opportunity *has been lost*, and we do not expect to hear of another. My mother bids me tell you that you are *much better* out of London just now than in it, on account of this wretched epidemic that is prevailing : people *coming fresh* amidst it always catch it : it is not sure but we shall run

away *ourselves*. I must add that we think it *very* strange you should have received this *summary* dismissal from Mrs. Pomeroy, and feel sure there must be a *cause* for it. We hope you are not attempting to pursue the young Lord of Pomeroy as you did my brother."

With a swelling of the heart, than which nothing could be more painful; with trembling hands that scarcely held the letter, Annaline gazed at the concluding lines and the innuendos they contained. That she should be deemed capable of "pursuing" the Earl of Essington or the young Lord of Pomeroy seemed to her more cruel than death; bitterly cruel to be told of it. For once in her gentle life, she went into a passion and tore the letter to fragments.

In point of fact, far from "pursuing" the Lord of Pomeroy, Annaline did all she could to keep out of his way, just as she had tried to keep out of Lord Essington's—but not from the same motive. After Mary's attack upon her the morning subsequent to Rupert's arrival, she, one of the most modest and right-minded girls in existence, would not be likely to offend on that score.

"But what is to be done?" she presently asked herself, recurring to the more practical part of Lady Geraldine's letter.—"And how wrong it was of me to give way to temper! If I cannot go there, where am I to go?"

"Where indeed? Joan Pomeroy was not at hand to be appealed to, even had Annaline liked to appeal to her: which she did not. Joan was little more than a stranger, and Joan was at a distance, paying visits. The Essingtons were the only friends she possessed in England. She could not start for Florence alone; and, if she could, she did not possess any money for the journey. Lady Essington had given her a sovereign to put into her pocket when she came to Pomeroy—and part of that she had spent in ribbons and gloves one day at Owlstone.

What was she to do? What could she say to Mrs. Pomeroy, who knew of her application to the Essingtons? Oh, what a sad thing it was to be poor—what embarrassments it brought in its wake.

A tap at her room door, and Mrs. Pomeroy came gliding in. She was a sad-looking woman now, though her face retained a good deal of its former beauty; and she wore sombre robes of black silk, and close bonnets. Ah, what a contrast!—between her, as she was now, and the gay young girl who had been Guy's wife. Mrs. Pomeroy might have sown tares for herself, but she had surely reaped their poison in its utmost bitterness. Annaline rose to present a chair as Mrs. Pomeroy advanced.

"You have read the letter I sent you in, Miss Hetley?" she began in her subdued voice. "I recognised Lady Geraldine's crabbed handwriting. I have often seen it when Lady Anna lived here. Does she appoint a day for your departure?"

What a question it was for the sensitive, humble-minded girl to have to answer! Her colour came and went; her fingers intertwined

themselves painfully one with another. Mrs. Pomeroy, looking fixedly at her in her apathetical way, wondered at the agitation.

"I don't know what to do," began Annaline, her voice low with its emotion. "Geraldine says—says they have visitors and cannot make room for me. I am so sorry."

"Is there nowhere else you can go? To no other friends?"

"I do not know of anywhere. The Essingtons are all the friends I have in England. I wish I could relieve you of myself—I wish I knew what I could do!"

What with pain, uncertainty, and distress, she burst into tears. Mrs. Pomeroy saw the dilemma she was in—that is, that she herself was in, in having at present to keep this waif. She rapidly ran the untoward perplexity over in her mind, and decided that it might have been worse.

Most certainly it might have been worse. For she had just learnt that the young Lord of Pomeroy was about to quit the abbey that morning upon an indefinite visit as to time. Annaline could not do so much harm during his absence.

"Don't cry," she said, kindly enough. "It cannot be helped. Visitors, have they?—well, I suppose the visitors will not remain long, and then you can go up. Would you mind my seeing what Lady Geraldine says?"

"I tore up her letter," avowed Annaline, glancing at the fragments in the grate. And if ever she could feel thankful for having gone into a passion, she felt so then. What would Mrs. Pomeroy have said—have thought—had she read that letter?

"Why should you have torn it up?"

"It did not require an answer," faltered Annaline, at a loss what else to say: and her tears deepened into sobs. "I wish I was nearer Florence. If I could but get to mamma! I am so very sorry that I have nowhere to go to, Mrs. Pomeroy."

"You must stay with us a little longer. It is of no consequence. I am sorry for your own sake that you should have had the trouble of coming so far, the fatigue of the long journeys. One can never tell whether fresh ideas will answer: and Mary was so very lonely without a companion. It is different now the lord has come home."

"Of course; I understand that," assented Annaline. "I am only grieved and annoyed at being any trouble to you."

"You had better get your things on, and I will take you for a drive," said Mrs. Pomeroy, feeling rather sorry for her. "I shall call at my mother's and then drive out for a few miles. The air will revive you. It is a brilliant morning."

"Thank you," responded Annaline, her heart warming to the kindness. "You are very good!"

(*To be concluded.*)

JOHN KEATS.

WE have stood by a solid rock and heard it, when struck, send forth a soft, bell-like sound. We have sat in a carriage on a steep Italian hillside, and seen two strong grey oxen forget the placid laziness of their nature and pull with a will in front of the horses. We have read a story, purporting to be a true one, of a deaf and dumb man being a band-master. But yet more wonderful than the phenomenon of the vocal rock, or of the active oxen, or of the musical deaf man, is that of a poet born in the house of a livery-stable keeper. John Keats's grandfather followed that profession in Moorfields, and it was under his roof, in October, 1795, that the author of "Endymion" first saw the light.

Keats's earliest years were spent in this same house, so that the surroundings of his childhood were not by any means suggestive of his future calling. No scent of honeysuckle or sweet-briar breathed around his cradle, but the odour of stale tobacco and of well curry-combed horses. His earliest footsteps did not tread grassy meadows, gemmed with cowslips or daisies, but the uneven stones of a court-yard, honeycombed by brown pebbles. His youthful slumbers were not hushed by the notes of the blackbird or the nightingale, but by free ditties trolled by idle stable boys. No legend of goblin or fairy echoed in his nursery, but stories about the miraculous performances of weight-carrying hunters, of fast trotters, and of racing favourites.

It is impossible to say how far the atmosphere that surrounded him influenced the little fellow's thoughts and feelings; it is certain that he was as far from being a milksop as any boy could be. It may be that the livery-stable helped to develop in him something of that manly courage that was always so marked a quality in his character, and that it partly kept under the delicate sensitiveness of his nature; and if so, it did him good service. Had it not been for the steadfast bravery which upheld him in all the trials of his short troubled life, his finely strung body and mind must have given way yet earlier than they did.

The livery-stable soon deprived little John Keats of one of his parents. His father rode out one day on a restive horse, was thrown, and died from the effects of the fall. This was before Keats was ten years old.

His mother, to whose exclusive care the boy was now left, seems to have been a woman who was made up of contrasts. Sometimes she would throw herself into the deepest whirlpool of amusement which the London of that day offered to those in her rank of life; sometimes she would walk through the world with the air of a rigid

Puritan. Now she would flirt, and now she would sit at home weeping over her widowhood and reading sermons. By turns, she would rejoice over her well-furnished wardrobe, and mourn over her ill-furnished mind.

So scanty are the notices we possess of Keats's childhood that we do not know how his mother's character worked upon his own; but we think we can trace a certain family likeness between her complex nature and that mixture of strength and weakness which was visible in the young poet.

From ten to fifteen Keats went to a school kept by a Mr. Clarke, at Enfield. There he made a friendship, which was to be life-long, with his master's son, Cowden Clarke, whose name was afterwards tolerably well known in the literature of his day.

At school Keats acquired a good deal of universal learning and some knowledge of Latin; but he never understood Greek, which is singular, considering how strongly the spirit of ancient Greece lives in much of his poetry. It is a curious instance of a peculiar tone of thought and feeling coming innately into a man without education, or as far as we know, inherited proclivities, having anything to do with it.

Keats's school career was not distinguished by any especial intellectual success. These boyish years were chiefly remarkable for a fiery readiness to resent any insult against himself or injustice done to another; for a love of beauty which shone in his expressive eyes as he lay idly under the trees watching spring deck herself in her glorious mantle, or gazing into the laughing face of summer; for a silent worship of woman, which showed itself in the deepening flush of his cheek and the tremor in his frame whenever, adorned with any unusual charm, she crossed his path.

In looking at Keats's youth, we must not forget one influence which wrought upon him in common with most thoughtful minds of his day: this was the French Revolution. When he was born the blood on the guillotine was hardly dry; when he was a boy the great throb, which the upheaving of France against tyranny had wakened in the heart of every nation, had not ceased to vibrate. All natures of any elevation and purity shrank with horror from the excesses of the Revolution, and from its perversion of laws, human and divine; but nevertheless, its spirit still breathed upon young active minds throughout Europe, working for good in a burning hatred against oppression, working for evil in a tendency to doubt and scepticism.

Naturally enough a youth, such as was Keats, did not escape this foremost influence of his time; and his character and all his writings were coloured by it. Though in early boyhood Keats did not burst into song, poetry was not the less sleeping in his nature, only waiting for a touch to arouse it. That touch came when he read Spenser for the first time. Contact with the genius of a poet of the sixteenth

century awoke the genius of a poet of the nineteenth. Then he wrote his first words in verse, under the title of "Imitation of Spenser."

The fountain thus unsealed soon began to flow freely, and before long he published a little volume of poems. The book was, however, quietly overlooked by the critics and not much attended to by the general public.

The next great intellectual revelation that the mind of Keats received was when, through a translation, he made acquaintance with Homer. He would sit up all night poring over the beloved pages, and his friends who happened to be sleeping near him would often be aroused by his cries of delight, which were like those of a man who has found a rich treasure.

His mother died before Keats quitted school, and thus he was left very much to rule himself. It was a dangerous inheritance for one of his temperament; and we almost wonder that he did not make worse use of it than he did. Soon after he left Mr. Clarke's school Keats became a medical student. He quickly made considerable progress in his profession, as a youth of his mental power was sure to do if he gave himself to his work in earnest; but before long he began to feel that a doctor was not what he was meant to be in life. He came out of the anatomical lecture-room with every sensitive nerve quivering with disgust. Abstruse medical books were, he found, not at all the sort of reading that suited him. He grew sick over the diagnosis of a painful disease. When he came to walk the hospitals he performed operations with some skill, it is true, but all the while he was shrinking and trembling as much as the patient.

After a time he felt that he could not go on with this distasteful work any longer; so he gave up medicine and resolved to be nothing but a literary man. It was a foolish step as far as worldly prosperity went. Almost all his small fortune had been spent in his medical education, and at present he was not the least known as an author. Keats, however, felt as if a weight had been rolled off his shoulders.

He now made his way into a literary set, who, in our opinion, did not do much good either to his style as a writer or his character as a man. It was a constellation that he was in the midst of, it is true, but some of the stars were wandering stars, and some of them were falling ones. Let us pause for a moment and look at Keats's new friends.

There is the man who holds such broad views, but who, nevertheless, lives in a groove of his own peculiar opinions; the man who would look into the depths of everything, but who has lost the key to life's mysteries, the key which the village child that reads his Bible holds in his hand; the man who would reform society, but has lost the simple art of making a home; the man whose name is Godwin.

Then there is one who plays with everything; he plays with duty,

he plays with life, he plays with love, he plays with friendship, and yet he does it all in such an airy, graceful way that we can hardly be angry with him. With all his faults, with all his errors, we feel that there is a heart in Leigh Hunt.

There is one who is stern and uncompromising, and sometimes even harsh, but who nevertheless is living up to his own standard according to his own light, and his name is Hazlitt. There is one who is beautiful, misled, misleading, a god in his genius—the frailest of mortals in his life; one whom we cannot praise, and yet whom we shrink with tears from blaming, and his name is Shelley.

Most of the faults in Keats's style come from a too close study of Leigh Hunt's writings. Keats was an immeasurably greater genius than his friend, but as young authors, even of the highest class, often do, he imitated in a certain degree a writer that he admired. We believe, also, that Keats contracted a certain vagueness in his religious opinions from his intimacy with Leigh Hunt and those who frequented his society.

Notwithstanding, however, the dangers of these new friendships (dangers which probably he himself was not aware of), this was the happiest part of Keats's short life. He was in daily intercourse with men whose high intellectual powers made them most congenial companions for him, and his mind was full of bright, young ambition, which as yet had known no check. We will try to take his photograph at this period, for we shall, alas! never see him to as much advantage again.

Chestnut curls cluster round a brow which rises up like a very temple of mind. The blue eyes are changeful, now soft, now fiery. The nose is well shaped. The lower part of the face does not correspond to the beauty of the upper; it is narrow, and the lips are too full. Still, in spite of this defect, it is a face that attracts and interests us, a face that has uncommon characters engraved upon it, a face that somehow clings to the memory. His figure is tall and well-proportioned, and his broad chest and strong shoulders suggest not the faintest idea of pulmonary disease.

He has a hatred of injustice and tyranny that prompts him, as he walks along, to stop and take the part of every little misused street boy. He has a passionate love for beauty, which makes his face as he passes through the country on a bright day seem a mirror of the fair world round him; which draws from him the words, "Never have I known such true delight as in watching the growth of flowers." He has an animal enjoyment of life which makes every hour of health and sunshine a festival for him. He has a soul in which dwells a warm longing for love and fame. Such was the dawn of Keats.

One day Shelley and Keats grew warm over a discussion on poetry. The end of it was that they agreed each to write a poem and to try which could finish first. In order that he might dedicate himself exclusively to his work, Keats retired to the Isle of Wight, and there,

with soft airs breathing round him, amid the scent of flowers and the song of birds, he wrote his "Endymion."

Keats completed his work in a rough form in six months. It was, however, much longer than that before he gave it to the world. He lingered over the offspring of his fancy with the anxious fondness of true genius, deepening the colouring here and softening it there.

At length "Endymion" was published. It was too marked a work to be passed over by the reviewers as his first little volume had been. Unless it had fallen into the kindly hands of some delicate discerning critic, who would have pointed out to the young author the faults which were scattered so abundantly among the real beauties of the poem, it was a book which was sure to excite either excessive praise or excessive censure. This latter was its fate.

Gifford, a Quarterly Reviewer, a man with about as much poetry in him as a steam-engine, finding that he could not understand Keats's genius, thought that the best thing he could do for his own dignity, and indeed for the world in general, was to laugh at and cut to pieces "Endymion." The lesser reviews echoed the bray of the great quarterly donkey, and the press spoke hardly a good word for Keats's poem. They could not, however, kill what was immortal; "Endymion" found even then many sympathetic readers, and since that time it has found thousands upon thousands more.

We have no space to enter into a discussion on the merits and demerits of "Endymion." We may, however, briefly say that in our eyes its chief failing is that it has too much of the body and too little of the soul.

Notwithstanding all that many writers have said to the contrary, we believe that Keats was not in the least crushed by the fierce attack of the critics. He had an instinctive consciousness of his own power too strong and a courage too energetic for that; there was in his poetry too much of the free music of the lark, who sings for no listeners, but because of the overflow of melody which is in him. No; disappointment of this sort had nothing to do with the rapid decay of Keats's health.

One of Keats's greatest friends was a Mr. Armitage Brown. He was a man of some talent, and so close was Keats's intimacy with him that they wrote a play together, sitting at the same table, Brown supplying the plot and arranging the scenes, and Keats putting it all into language. This play never reached the stage, but not the less for that should we have liked to have been in Armitage Brown's place in those days of joint composition, and to have watched the sunshine of inspiration dawn on the young poet's face.

Armitage Brown was the indirect means of bringing Keats to the great consuming sorrow of his life. At Brown's house at Hampstead he met a lady who at once threw a spell over his heart and soul. She was a relation of Brown's, and was domesticated in his family on account of some disagreement with her own nearer kindred. Thus

his constant visits to his friend brought the poet into frequent contact with her.

"She has the beauty of a young leopardess"—such was Keats's description of this lady in a letter to a friend. The words give us a good idea of the sort of charm which must have formed her attraction for him. There must have been a free, wild grace about her; an absence in her of all affectation and false display; there must have reigned in her manner and bearing a contempt of hollow outward forms. We can well imagine that she had the kind of fascination which would have made its way into John Keats's heart.

Keats's passion quickly began to assume gigantic proportions. The love of this young poet was not like most men's love. It was a flinging of his whole being into one feeling, a twining of every fibre of his heart round one centre; it was to look at each object through the one all-absorbing affection. He moved, he breathed, he slept, he dreamt, he woke, in his love.

Before long Keats declared his attachment, but obstacles rose up between him and his happiness. He was without almost any assured income. Literature was at present proving no gold-mine for him. He had given up medicine, the only profession he had ever studied thoroughly. No walk of life seemed readily to open itself to him. His beloved's relations gave an ungracious consent to the pair being, if they chose it, engaged; but they refused to allow any thought of a marriage until Keats's worldly prospects were changed.

It is difficult to make out what was the real attitude of the leopardess at this conjuncture. She certainly liked the poet's homage, and returned sufficiently his feelings to allow him to take the place of her accepted lover; but she appears to have cared very little for their marriage being put off for an indefinite period. We fancy there must have been something of the cat as well as the leopardess in her nature, and that she must have purred, and caressed, and received softly much stroking and fondling without being capable of any very deep devotion.

From this time forward Keats's life was one dreary stretch of unfulfilled longing. He had no taste for any work except literary work; his whole being shrank from the drudgery which is inseparably attendant on the beginning of every profession; and yet his entire earthly happiness centred round one point, which was a home with the woman he loved as its queen. But how was such a home to be founded without money?

But it will be asked, Had not Keats any gentler and more placid love for his own close kindred which might have at least soothed him in this season of great trial. He was far from being without family affection. It was a heavy blow for him when his brother passed away before him. When a nephew was born to him his joy showed itself in a pretty little burst of song. When he was dying he pressed a letter from his sister Madame Lanos to his lips and to his heart.

But no love of brother or sister could make up for the unsatisfied love of her whom he had made the star of his life.

In order that he might devote himself more exclusively to work, Keats left Hampstead, where he had been lately living that he might daily see his beloved, and established himself in a lodging in the middle of London. It was a dreary home for the young poet. No whisper of wood and stream soothed his ear, no breeze bringing sweets from the hay-field or garden caressed his cheek; his eye was refreshed by no dance of green leaves in the sunlight. Yet here, with the roar of the great city round him, amid the rattle of hackney coaches, and the tramp of feet, and the discord of street cries, his genius soared higher than it had yet done, for he now wrote "Isabella and the Pot of Basil," and "The Eve of St. Agnes." These two short stories in verse are far above any part of "Endymion;" for simple pathos and for exquisite tenderness and grace they have few equals among poems of their kind in any language.

"The Pot of Basil" and "The Eve of St. Agnes" were published with several other short poems. This time both critics and public gave Keats a friendly reception. He was universally acknowledged among the poets of the day; still even this volume only brought him small money remuneration.

Keats did not stay long in his London lodging. It was not that he sighed for green fields or the song of the nightingale, or for sunshine unadulterated by smoke, but for the eyes and voice and touch of his love. Even a few miles was for him too great a separation from her. There was life for him nowhere except in the very air she breathed; so he again settled at Hampstead, close to Armitage Brown's house. Keats's health now began to show signs of giving way. He had never been very strong, and anxiety about his unattainable marriage fretted both body and mind like the perpetual wearing of a chain.

We hope that Keats's promised wife gave her whole heart and soul at this time to the work of soothing and strengthening him—we hope, but we are not sure; for we cannot help doubting her having been quite worthy of all the worship the poet gave her. It was a proud task for any woman to be Keats's helper and comforter, to touch with a delicate hand the sensitive chords of his nature, to do the highest and purest work of her sex by leading him to an Almighty love on which his noble spirit might have leant securely; but we do not believe that the poet's chosen love fully understood the value of the lot which had fallen to her, that she ever exercised the sweet and lofty rights which were hers.

One day when Keats was returning from a short absence from home, he took an outside place on an evening coach for Hampstead. It was a bitterly cold night. The east wind came bounding over the hedges like a cruel giant. The moon looked like a ball of frozen crystal. The church spires came out sharply against the background of the clear, star-sprinkled sky.

The passengers on the top of the coach wrapped their great-coats closer round them. The ladies inside drew up the windows. A cloud of steam rose from the horses. Hoofs and wheels rang merrily on the hard ground. The guard's horn echoed through the crisp air, waking up the drowsy little country places, where but a few lights still twinkled.

Little did Keats heed the chill breeze. There was warmth and brightness enough in his heart for a summer noontide, for he was going back to her who was his sunlight.

This journey was, however, the beginning of the end for the young poet. That night he rose from his bed to bring up a considerable quantity of blood. He lit a candle with a nervous quickness, probably increased by old medical experience. His knowledge as a doctor at once told him that it was arterial blood, and he exclaimed, "In this blood my death-warrant is written out."

Care, however—and he did give himself the most anxious care, for he clung passionately to life for the sake of his love—restored him for a while. This touch of the finger of death made him more eager than ever to reach his long-delayed marriage; for, if he was to die, he wanted first to enjoy a year or two of household happiness.

He began vigorously to form new plans for gaining a settled income. He would find employment in some foreign land, he would resolutely enter once more the medical profession. Notwithstanding the sensitive horror with which he shrank from the more painful part of a doctor's work, his energetic courage—of which, in common with most great men, he possessed, as has before been said, a considerable share—would have doubtless enabled him to carry out this latter plan, had it not been that the hand of disease was again laid heavily upon him.

All the symptoms of consumption now began to declare themselves in his constitution. There was but one hope, to seek a warmer climate. To leave England was for him like tearing the branch from the tree, for to leave England was to leave her; but still he went. Severn, the painter, one of his closest and dearest friends, accompanied him, and watched over him with all a brother's love, and the two travelled to Rome. It was too late for southern breezes and sunshine to bring even any alleviation to the disease; every day it made more rapid advances. Keats first struggled passionately against his early fate, and then grew resigned.

Why was not the woman he loved at his side to soften his last sufferings, to whisper in his ear words about a higher love? A journey to Rome was no doubt in those days a very different matter from what it is now; but still, at such a moment, nothing should have kept a woman from her promised husband. Had she been there, there would have been less sadness in that grave in which, before his twenty-sixth year on earth was completed, they laid in the eternal city the body of John Keats.

ALICE KING.

SHADOWED FORTH.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

I.

IT was a very foolish compact to make, but both Osric and I were at an age when foolish things are often done. Neither of us was turned twenty-one. We were, in fact, nothing more than a couple of boys, however much we might choose to fancy ourselves men of the world. My career in life was already decided upon. I had elected to become an artist and earn my bread by means of my brush and palette. I attended the Life School assiduously, and had already exhibited at one or two of the minor galleries. I had a couple of rooms on a third floor in Bloomsbury, and my particular chum, Osric Imray, had the two immediately below mine. It was not a part of the town that his own tastes would have led him to live in. He had simply pitched his tent in that particular spot in order that he might be near me, although I was nothing but a poor painter, while he was the son of a rich banker, and, in all probability, would one day be a rich banker himself.

But that was a point on which Osric as yet could not make up his mind. He hated the name of banker, and at present was coquetting with the law, as he had already coquetted with literature and the arts generally, only to discover, after a greater or lesser loss of time and labour, that he had no real vocation for any of them. His father, wise in his generation, did no more than urge him gently, as one might coax an obstinate but high-spirited horse towards the path he would have him follow. Mr. Imray, senior, probably judged that when Osric should have had "his fling," and, after having tried half-a-dozen things, have thrown each of them up in turn, he would settle quietly down into the groove arranged for him by parental foresight. And the result proved the accuracy of his calculations.

Meanwhile Osric had plenty of pocket money and very little to do, his legal studies being hardly more than a pleasant fiction, at which he was as ready to laugh as heartily as any one. Our evenings were nearly always spent either in his rooms or mine, and many were the wordy arguments, permeated through and through with tobacco smoke, in which we indulged on such occasions. On one particular winter evening, after befogging ourselves for a couple of hours with some of the super-subtleties of German metaphysics, our talk wandered away into another channel, and fell upon ghosts, apparitions, cases of second sight, and such like gruesome matters, till at length we so worked ourselves up that a louder rattle of wind in the

chimney than ordinary made both of us start in our seats and stare at each other with frightened eyes.

It was on this evening that the compact which I have already designated as a foolish one, was made between Osric and myself. We agreed that whichever of us died first should (if it were so permitted by the Unseen Power that rules the destinies of men) appear to the survivor and warn him of the event that had taken place. We were very much in earnest in the matter, and as a proof of our determination to carry out the agreement—if permitted to do so—we then and there made an exchange of rings. I think we were both a little bit ashamed of our folly next morning, and the topic was hardly ever alluded to again between us. But when, some four months later, Osric and I shook hands and said good-bye, knowing well that we should not see each other for a long time to come, his last words to me were, "You have not forgotten our compact?" and mine an assurance that there was no likelihood of my doing so. Osric was called to Scotland by the failing health of his father, and a week afterwards I started for Italy, and did not again set foot in England for a couple of years.

Ten years came and went, during which I only saw Osric some dozen times in all, and that was when he came to London on business. He had long ago settled down into a steady, plodding banker, and was all that his father could desire him to be. Sometimes when he came south I was in Cumberland or Wales, and at other times he had not even an hour to spare, so that our meetings were necessarily infrequent. But with the grip of each other's hand the old spirit of good fellowship came back on the instant—we were nineteen again, with the world all before us, and for the time being the years that had parted us seemed to have no more substance than a dream.

October was here—October in Lakeland, bringing with it a change of weather that sent such brethren of the brush as, like late swallows, still lingered, flying southward as fast as steam could lend them wings. I, too, was one of the fugitives, but I took my flight by easy stages, stopping for a night wherever whim or fancy dictated, and then forward again next morning. On a certain chill afternoon I found myself at a quaint old hostelry on the banks of the Dove. I was charmed with the appearance of the place, and decided to take up my quarters in it for the night. Supper, and then to bed, at the early hour of ten, pleasantly tired, but not so much so as to cause me to omit my favourite habit of reading myself to sleep. I put the candle on a little table close to the head of my bed, but well out of the way of the curtains. After half an hour with my well-loved Elia I dropped quietly off, leaving the candle—a long one—still burning, a practice I generally adopt when sleeping in strange places. After sleeping for some time I awoke suddenly and completely, with a vivid sense upon me of not being alone in the room. I opened my eyes and stared round, but without lifting my head from the pillow. Sometimes on waking up

in a strange room it has taken me a moment or two to recollect where I was, but in this case I recognized the room and its furniture in an instant. The candle had burnt low and was beginning to gutter. A quarter of an hour more and I should be left in darkness. All was silent, with a death-like, oppressive silence such as one never experiences save in lonely country places, such as the town knows nothing of. Not a breath of wind to stir the branches outside, not the timid scratching of a mouse behind the wainscot, not even the faint friendly thud of far-off hoofs on the frosty high road. Nature, animate and inanimate, might have been struck with eternal death, and I the last man left alive in a world of shadows. I shivered involuntarily, and drew the bedclothes more closely about me.

As I have already said, there was a vivid sense upon me at the moment of waking of not being alone in the room. I had a feeling as if some one had been bending over me and breathing lightly on my forehead. I could feel the terror that shone out of my eyes in that first waking stare round the room, while my glance travelled from the clothes cupboard on one side, with the chair still in front of it that I had put there, to the locked door on the other side.

But when nothing met my view save the commonplace room and its commonplace furniture—as like a hundred other inn rooms I had slept in at various times as one pea is like another—and when with a quick swish I had dashed back the curtains at the head of the bed and had satisfied myself that no one was hidden behind them—the terror that had gripped my heart but a moment before began to loosen its hold. Another minute, and I dropped back with a rebound into the world of work-a-day realities, in which such things as ghostly fancies and midnight tremors are either unknown, or known only to be ridiculed. With a shrug and a yawn I nestled down amongst my pillows, and made a mental memorandum never to eat potted trout for supper again. A minute or two later the death-like silence was broken by the faint chiming of some far-away clock. I put forth a lazy hand, found my watch under the pillow, and drew it out to ascertain the time. It was exactly half-past one. I was putting my watch back and was congratulating myself that I had still seven cozy hours of bed before me, when my wandering glance was caught and fixed by a strange and sinister-looking shadow on the ceiling of my room.

I stared at it with wide-open eyes; and, as I stared, so vivid and realistic did it look, my heart for a moment or two seemed to stand still in dread expectancy, and I felt as if I were about to witness the consummation of some dire tragedy, which I was powerless to hinder or avert. But the shadow moved not for all my staring, and as before I had jeered at myself for allowing the foolish fancies that waylaid me at the moment of waking to have any effect upon me, so now I was not long in perceiving that what at the first glance had so startled me, could be, and was, nothing more than the shadow of a portion of the

furniture of the bed, projected by the light of the candle on to the ceiling, but distorted in the act, as shadows often are distorted, beyond ordinary recognition. But although I was perfectly satisfied in my own mind as to the cause of the shadow, I was none the less impressed by the singularity of the effect thus obtained. What I saw was the representation of a man, cloaked and wearing a slouched hat—of a man with a remarkably hooked and parrot-like nose—in the act of stooping over some one or something unseen, and striking down at the same moment with a knife or short dagger. Although nothing but a shadow, it seemed instinct with a sinister and murderous purpose. Life seemed to breathe from its every curve. You almost felt as if you could see the victim. An instant more and that dagger would descend.

I stretched forth my hand and moved the candlestick a couple of inches further to the right. At once the effect was gone. The shadow was still there, but it was a shadow without meaning or purpose. The slouched hat was gone, the hooked nose was gone, the dagger was gone. Then I moved the candlestick a few inches to the left, the result being the production of another unmeaning shadow like nothing I had ever seen before. Then I replaced the candlestick as nearly as I could judge on the spot where it had first stood. I wanted to reproduce the first shadow, but the result was something altogether different. Slightly piqued at my ill-success, I moved the candlestick here and there, constantly varying the shape of the shadow, but never for a moment obtaining more than the slightest resemblance to the one that had so strangely startled me. It was unaccountable. Then, all at once, the candle flared out for a moment —the next, darkness swallowed me up.

As a rule the impressions which print themselves on our mental tablets during the dark hours, however vivid they may seem at the time, look but dim and faded reproductions of themselves in the clear light of morning. So it was in the present case. The recollection of my midnight fancies served as food for a smile over breakfast; then more serious matters claimed me, and I put them aside as so many other trifles are put aside, to be remembered, perchance, at some odd moment now and then, or, perchance, forgotten for ever.

Two days later I found myself in London, where some terrible news awaited me. My dear friend, Osric Imray, had been murdered —murdered and robbed while travelling by railway. It appeared that he had been from home, transacting certain business connected with the bank, and was on his return journey, having in his possession a large sum in notes and drafts, when he met his sad fate. He had bribed the guard to lock the door of his compartment and so keep other passengers out, but at a certain station he was found stabbed to the heart. The bag that had contained his property was missing, and the carriage door was unlocked. Purse, watch, jewellery —all were gone. It was evident that the murderer, whoever he

might be, must have quitted his own compartment while the train was en route, have obtained access to Imray's compartment, probably while the latter was asleep, and having accomplished his dreadful purpose, have gone back along the foot-boards of the carriages to his own seat. A daring deed to do, without a doubt, but certainly not an impossibility. At the next station the murderer had doubtless left the train like any ordinary passenger, and had mingled with, and been lost among the crowd before the discovery of his crime. So effectually had he taken his precautions that all efforts to trace him proved utterly unavailing. Gradually, as time went on, the excitement of the public wore itself out, and the attention of the police became absorbed in other and more immediate duties.

To all appearance, Imray's murder was destined to add one more to the long list of undiscovered crimes. I mourned my friend long and sincerely. If any recollection of the foolish compact we had entered into as young men ever came into my memory, it was speedily dismissed as something unworthy of serious thought. But it certainly did strike me as a singular coincidence that the murder took place on the very morning and, as nearly as could be calculated, at the very hour that I had been startled by that strange shadow on the ceiling of my bedroom. It struck me as a singular coincidence, but as nothing more.

Some six or seven months had passed away, when a commission to paint a certain picture necessitated my taking a journey from London to a place some distance north of Aberdeen. I left home early one morning hoping to reach my journey's end sometime in the course of the forenoon of the following day. In order to do this it was necessary that I should travel all night. About ten o'clock, being alone in my compartment and thoroughly tired out, I dropped into a refreshing sleep. The train was still dashing along at express speed when I awoke with the sensation of not having been asleep for more than a few minutes. I looked at my watch, and was surprised to find how late it was. Then I rubbed the window and peered out, but the night was moonless and overcast. Not even the vaguest outline could be discerned of the great hills sleeping around, whose sacred silence we seemed so rudely to disturb. I let down the window to obtain a breath of fresh air. A minute later the train shot into a tunnel.

From my seat close to the open window I could see the clear reflection of each lighted compartment on the black damp wall of the tunnel. There, too, was my own shadow, sharply focussed on the wall, as I sat peering forward with the peak of my travelling-cap pulled well over my brows. And there too, as I lived, and emanating from the next compartment, was a second shadow still more sharply defined than mine—the twin shadow of that other shadow I had seen six months before in my inn bedroom! So well did I

remember its every feature—if a shadow can be said to have features —that it was impossible for me to be mistaken. There, as before, was the cloaked and stooping figure, the slouched hat, the parrot-like nose, and there, above all, was the uplifted arm and the hand that clutched a dagger. I seemed to freeze as I looked. Not to have saved my life could I have either stirred or spoken during those few moments. As before, the shadow was motionless, or would have been but for the slight oscillation of the train. The tragedy, if such it were, did not advance—the uplifted dagger did not fall—the unseen victim put forth no arm in self-defence.

Another minute and we were out of the tunnel, and the shadow, focussed no longer on the black enclosing walls, radiated into space and vanished. I was more disturbed in my mind than I would have cared to own. What did the second appearance of this same ominous shadow portend? Was it sent as a warning, or as a clue to the murder: or was it merely one of those singular coincidences, by no means uncommon in everyday life, but which we yet find it impossible satisfactorily to explain? For that night, at least, "Macbeth had murdered sleep."

By-and-by the train slackened speed. We were approaching a station at which we were timed to stop. Before the train had come fairly to a stand my carriage-door was opened and I was on the platform. No one had had time to leave the compartment next to mine; no one did leave it. I tried the door; it was locked: I peered through the windows; the compartment was empty.

I made my way to the guard of the train. "The middle compartment of that carriage is empty and locked," I said; "but there was certainly some one in it as we came through the tunnel just now."

For a moment he looked startled. Then he held up his lamp and looked at the number painted on the door. "M 98," he said, as he read it out. "No, sir; no one was in that carriage as we came through the tunnel. No one has been in it since we left B——. I locked it there myself; and, as you see, it is locked still."

I did not care to tell the man what I had seen, so I merely said that I supposed I must have been mistaken, and left him. Two minutes later, as I was standing at the refreshment bar, he came up to me with a mysteriously confidential air. "About that carriage, sir," he whispered. "I may tell you that there is something uncommon about it, though it would not do to tell everybody so. It's the very carriage in which poor Mr. Imray was murdered. M 98—that's the number. The middle compartment it was that he was found in. I was the guard that was examined at the inquest. You have not forgotten the case, sir?"

Forgotten it? Should I ever forget? I don't know how I answered the man, but he must have seen that his words had moved me. "And now," he went on, "whenever I see M 98 running as part of my train, I always make a point of locking the middle

compartment, and if anybody wants to get into it I tell them it's engaged. It seems to me as if I couldn't bear to see anybody travelling in it, knowing what I know about it."

I slipped a coin into the man's hand. "Have my traps got out of the train," I said; "I shall go no further to-night."

Was there nothing more than a coincidence in all this? I kept asking myself. Had I not been singled out for some mysterious purpose, of which as yet I knew nothing. "It is—it must be, something more than blind chance," I said to myself. The more I turned the matter over in my mind, the more settled became my conviction that there was something more yet to come—that I had but to wait patiently, and in due time the riddle would be read for me—the mystery solved.

But when weeks and months passed away, and nothing further happened: when no sign or token was vouchsafed me, and when time had in some measure blunted the sharp edge of memory: I began to think that I must have been led away by my own nervous fancies; that for once I had allowed my imagination to outstrip my common-sense. Finally, I came to believe that I had never seen the shadow in the tunnel at all, but that the fact of thinking I had seen such a thing was a pretty good proof that my mental equipoise was not quite so finely adjusted as I had fondly imagined it to be. Had I laid the case before my doctor, his verdict would have been that I had overworked myself, and that all I needed was rest and change of scene.

About this time I received a commission to paint a picture illustrative of a certain phase of low-class London life. In my search for types and faces to embody in my picture, I found myself after nightfall on several occasions in some of the lowest neighbourhoods, and among some of the vilest dens, that the metropolis had at that time reason to be ashamed of. I had several acquaintances among the police, and under their sheltering wings I visited sundry places into which it would not have been safe for me to venture alone.

Said one of these acquaintances, Sergeant Smith, to me one night, after we had been the round of several queer places: "There's often a rum lot in here, sir, though mostly foreigners. Suppose we finish up by taking a peep at them." The place he spoke of was a mean and dingy-looking café, situated in a mean and dingy street somewhere in the purlieus of Soho and Leicester Square. We pushed open the swing-door and went in, and at once I could have fancied that I was hundreds of miles from London, and that I had lost myself in some low neighbourhood of the Quartier Latin. But with the place and the people found there I have nothing here to do—or rather, I have to do with one person only. I did not see him when I first went in, nor till after I had sat down and ordered a cup of coffee. But as soon as I did see him, or rather, as soon as I caught sight of the shadow reflected on the wall beyond him, I

started to my feet with an exclamation that turned a dozen suspicious pairs of eyes on me in a moment. On the coarse whitewashed wall of this mean café I beheld, for the third time, the sinister outline which had haunted me twice already—once in my bedroom at the inn on the Dove, and once in the tunnel, as I was travelling in the carriage in which poor Imray had been murdered. Unbidden and unsought by me, for the third time, there it was, as clearly defined as though it were the same shadow outlined in charcoal to the most minute particular that I had seen before.

It was the shadow and not the man that in the first instance drew my eyes to the remote corner of the room which they occupied, apart from anyone, but my gaze now turned involuntarily to the man himself. I was filled with a sort of dread curiosity—a feeling which I could not analyse had possession of me. Who and what manner of man was this that had been so strangely singled out before me from all the other millions of living units scattered over the face of the earth? Was the riddle going to be read for me at last?

He was tall, thin, and bony, as well as could be seen for the long, heavy, old-fashioned cloak, with its fur collar and quaint clasps, in which he was wrapped. He wore a soft felt hat, pulled low down over his brows. He had red hair, and a short, pointed beard and moustache of the same colour. His large, Roman nose made his thin cadaverous face look thinner and more cadaverous than it would otherwise have looked. When my attention was first drawn to him, he had risen to his feet, and was staring intently at the door, through which three or four new comers were filing slowly into the room. He looked as if he were impatiently awaiting the coming of some one.

In one hand he held a roll of French bread, in the other a long, slender pocket-knife. For a moment or two the knife was poised in mid air while he gazed frowningly at the door. Then, when he whom he was expecting did not come, the knife descended, the bread was severed, and he sat down to his chocolate and dry crust with the air of a man who had not tasted food since yesterday. But, mean and commonplace as the man and his surroundings might seem and were, prosaic, as might be and was, the occupation on which he was engaged, I could not but hearken to the dread voice that whispered in my heart: "The man before you is the murderer of Osric Imray!"

II.

"Do you see somebody you know?" asked Sergeant Smith, prompted thereto by the exclamation that broke involuntarily from my lips the moment my eyes caught sight of the shadow on the wall.

"Yes," I said, with a sort of gasp as I resumed my seat. "Somebody that I have been looking for for a long time. You see that man," I added, "in the cloak and slouched hat, sitting by himself in

the top left-hand corner?" The sergeant nodded. "Have you ever seen him before to night?"

"I can't say that I recollect his face," answered Smith cautiously, after a long steady stare.

"And yet it is anything but an ordinary face. Put somebody on to find out all that can be found out about him, and bring your report to me as soon as you are ready."

"It shall be done, sir," was the sergeant's prompt response.

"To what class do the customers of this place mostly belong?" I asked.

"Five-sixths of them are foreigners, as you can see for yourself, sir. A sprinkling of them may be French or Belgian workmen, who have found employment in London. The rest I should put down as being chiefly revolutionists and conspirators of different nationalities who have fled their country, and who contrive to eke out a subsistence here, few save themselves know how: while waiting for a turn of Fortune's wheel that may make them generals or senators, and give them, in their turn, the power of shooting or exiling those who are now at the top of the tree.

"The first thing to be done," continued Sergeant Smith, as soon as we were outside the café, "is to ascertain where our Jewish-looking friend hides his head of a night. Do you, sir, wait here a minute or two while I go and look for one of my fellows. If our friend comes out meanwhile, follow him at a distance."

Away went the sergeant, while I remained on watch near the door of the café. But no one came out, and in five minutes Sergeant Smith was back, accompanied by a policeman in plain clothes. To this man certain instructions were given, after which the sergeant and I went our several ways.

Some eight or nine days passed, when, one evening on returning to my rooms, I found the sergeant waiting for me. What he had to tell me may briefly be related as follows.

The man's name—or rather, the name he was known by—was Pierre Lenoir, but whether he were really a Frenchman, as his name would imply, was doubtful. Smith was inclined to put him down as a Pole or a Hungarian; but the sergeant's knowledge of different nationalities was neither accurate nor extensive. To whatever country the man belonged, he had no ascertainable employment, nor any visible means of subsistence. He lived in one room, the second-floor front of No. 33A, Winckworth Street, Soho. He generally left his lodgings about noon; breakfasted at some café; read the newspapers, English and foreign; smoked innumerable cigarettes; sauntered through the streets for an hour or two, sometimes in company, sometimes alone; visited different compatriots, all of whom, like himself, seemed to live in one room; and so, in the course of the evening, found his way back to one or another café where he spent the hours till midnight, sometimes brooding silently over his own thoughts, sometimes play-

ing dominoes or draughts noisily with his friends. After that, home to his second-floor front, not to be seen over the threshold again till noon the next day. So far as could be ascertained, when at home he associated with nobody and had few or no visitors.

Such was the substance of what Sergeant Smith had to tell me. But now that I had found out so much, what was I to do next? What use could I make of the information thus acquired? I had settled upon no definite plan of action. I only felt that I must do something—or rather, I felt that something was given me to do. As yet the way was dark before me, but that light would come in time I did not doubt. I did not doubt that behind the thrice-seen shadow was a hidden purpose which of a surety would in due time remain hidden no longer.

On the evening of the day following that of the sergeant's visit I found myself in Winckworth Street, Soho. That it had at one time been a street with some pretensions to be considered fashionable was at once apparent, both from the size of the houses and the style in which they were built. But as the tide of society ebbed westward, so had Winckworth Street gradually but surely fallen into decay, till at length the whilom homes of fashion and gentility had come to be nothing more than so many lodging-houses; not as yet lodging-houses of the commonest kind, but year by year imperceptibly tending that way. No. 33A differed in nowise from its neighbours. It had a basement floor below the level of the street, the window of which looked into a tiny railed off space not much bigger than a lady's travelling trunk. Above this was a room with three windows—it had once been the dining-room—with a front door and a rather fine porch, that probably dated from the reign of the First or Second George. Over this was what had originally been the drawing-room, with its four flat-looking windows and small longitudinal panes. Higher still were two more stories of four windows each, and then the roof.

According to Smith, the second-floor front was the room occupied by Lenoir. To this I at once directed my attention. As stated already, it had four windows. At one of these windows a young woman now sat sewing, and yet the sergeant had said that Lenoir lived alone and had no visitors. I paced up and down the street several times, glancing up at the window each time I passed it. All the windows had venetian blinds, but after a time I noticed that the two left-hand windows, at one of which the girl was sitting, had, in addition, short blinds of some common kind of net or muslin, while the two right-hand windows were bare. Then it struck me that the second-floor front was probably divided into two rooms with two windows to each room, Lenoir being the occupant of one of them and the girl who was sewing of the other.

I was still busy working out this idea, when I noticed that a small card was suspended in the dining-room window. I crossed the road to read what was written on it. "Top Back-room to Let, Unfurnished,"

were the words I saw. My heart gave a throb as I read. I walked down the street and up again while I composed myself. Then I knocked. The door was answered by a faded, washed-out old woman, whose face looked all nose and chin. I told her I wanted to look at the room that was to let, and at her request I followed her up stairs. Of course the room suited me. Any room in that house would have suited me. I agreed at once to take it. "I suppose you have several other lodgers in the house?" I asked. "Heaps of 'em," was the answer. Then she told me that the whole of the house was rented by her husband, who, with herself, lived on the basement floor. That the ground floor was let off to a professor of music, and the drawing-room floor to a professor of dancing and his two daughters. On the floor above were "Mounseer Lenoir," a very quiet French gentleman; and, in the adjoining room, a young lady connected with one of the "theaytres." Higher still, a young West-end shopman found accommodation, and at the back was the room I had just taken. When I told the old lady that I was an artist by profession, she answered that there were "lots of 'em" about that neighbourhood, but from her tone I gathered that she did not consider them of much account.

Next day I moved a few traps into my domicile, the chief articles being an easel and a camp bedstead, and tried to make myself as comfortable as the circumstances of the case would permit.

As it was far from my intention to spend the whole of my time in Winckworth Street, I still retained my own rooms, visiting them daily, and still looking upon them as my real home.

But between ten o'clock and noon next day I was always at No. 33A, that is to say, during the whole time Lenoir was under the same roof. At the end of a week I had seen him twice. Once I brushed past him on the stairs as I was going down and he coming up; once I encountered him at the corner of the street as I was on my way to the house. On neither occasion did he appear to take more notice of me than if there had been no such person in existence.

In my search for any scraps of information that might prove useful to me, I made it my business to ingratiate myself with my landlady and her husband. The latter was a man between sixty and seventy years old. He had been a soldier at one time, and after that a gentleman's servant, and had travelled much in early life. He was a great smoker, and fond of a "crack" with anyone that would talk to him. So one or two evenings a week I made a point of descending to the basement and smoking a pipe with the old fellow. On these occasions I heard the histories of all his lodgers as far as they were known to him, although it was about one man only that I cared to hear. But of Lenoir he could tell me very little more than I had already been told by Smith. In the eyes of the old man and his wife the Frenchman was a model lodger. He gave no trouble, kept regular hours, had no visitors, and was always ready with his rent.

But the young lady who was connected with the "theaytre" was not always ready with her rent. She had been out of an engagement for a considerable time, and her means were nearly exhausted. She had paid no rent for six weeks. The old man and his wife were loth to turn the girl out of her room, but all the same they wanted their money.

All at once an idea struck me. "Suppose the young lady and I exchange rooms," I said. "Her room is larger than mine; besides which the light is better for painting. If she will agree to this, I will pay up her back rent, and also a month's rent in advance of the room she will move into."

"If she don't accept your offer, sir," said the old man, "I'll send her packing before she's a day older."

But she did accept it with tears of gratitude the next day. While the Frenchman was from home, the transfer of chattels was effected, and that night I slept in one of the two rooms on the second-floor front. Only a thin brick wall now separated Lenoir and myself.

One other piece of information was furnished me by my landlord's garrulity, which might or might not prove useful in time to come. He gave me to understand that he had a pass-key which would open the lock of every door in the house. He had supplied himself with this in consequence of one of his lodgers having committed suicide in his room, and the affair not having been discovered for upwards of a week. Ever since that time, if any of his lodgers were missing for more than twenty-four hours, he entered their rooms without ceremony, and satisfied himself that all was right on his premises. I did not fail to note carefully the particular nail in the plate-rack on which the master-key was usually hung.

Lenoir and I were now close neighbours indeed, but still, in one sense, as far apart as ever. The proverbial politeness of foreigners was certainly not exemplified in his case; and, for my own part, seeing that I could never pass the man without a shudder, it was hardly likely that I should try to cultivate his acquaintance. He must have known that I lodged in the same house with him; in all probability he was quite aware that I had removed into the room next his; but whether on that account he distrusted me, and began to regard me with suspicion, I have no means of knowing. In any case, there we were, separated only by six inches of wall, but as much strangers to each other as though one of us dwelt inside the Great Pyramid and the other one outside.

Many were the hours that I sat brooding and smoking by the open window of my room, turning over this scheme and that, vainly trying to devise some plan which should bring me nearer the end I had in view. That end I had by this time set clearly before myself. It was neither more nor less than to bring Lenoir to justice as the murderer of Osric Imray. That he was the murderer I never once doubted. The certainty was impressed upon me at the moment of my seeing

him and his shadow in conjunction at the café, and from that certainty I had never yet wavered.

By-and-by a scheme began to shape itself vaguely in my brain. I worked it out bit by bit, and adopted it at last only because I could think of nothing better. It might succeed in furthering my ends, but the probability was that it would not succeed. In any case it was better to make an effort and fail than not to make an effort at all.

But to carry out the scheme in question it was needful that I should have a confederate. I was not long in making up my mind as to whom that confederate should be. Some two years previously I had picked a young arab out of the London gutters and had induced him to sit to me, rags and all, as a subject in one of my pictures. I got to feel an interest in the lad, poor, neglected waif though he was, and after I had done with him for art purposes I determined not to lose sight of him. The result was that, after giving Tim eighteen months' rough schooling, I found a situation for him as assistant to a greengrocer. To this greengrocer I now went, and asked him to lend Tim to me for a month, a request with which he at once complied. So Tim and I went back to Winckworth Street, where Drew, my landlord, provided him with a shakedown in the attic.

The first thing I did next morning was to put into Tim's hand a lump of wax, one surface of which bore the impression of the wards of a key. It was a facsimile of Drew's master-key. Watching my opportunity evening after evening when I went downstairs to smoke a pipe with the old man, there came a time when he was called out of the room to answer a knock at the front door. Left alone, I possessed myself of the key for a couple of minutes, and took a careful impression of it on the piece of wax which I had brought in my pocket for that purpose. This I now handed to Tim. "Take this," I said, "and get a key made from it." Four days later he brought me the key.

I tried it on my own door first of all, but it would neither lock or unlock it. Then Tim procured two or three files of different sizes and patterns, and he and I worked on the key at intervals for a couple of days. At the end of that time our labours were crowned with success.

That moment of triumph was worth all the time and labour it had cost me. I inserted the key in Lenoir's lock, and the bolt shot noiselessly back: I turned the handle and the door seemed to open of its own accord. I stood on the threshold of Pierre Lenoir's room.

The room was an exact counterpart of my own. There was the same old-fashioned grate and quaintly carved chimney piece. The same deep skirting-board of oak, black with age. The same foliated cornice of ornamental plaster work running round the room at the junction of walls and ceiling. The same unwieldy shutters, and the same grand old door. Of the furniture I took no

note. Whether it were good, bad, or indifferent, was no concern of mine. Satisfied with what I had seen, I shut the door, relocked it, and went back to my own room. So far I had been successful. Should I be equally successful in that which I proposed to myself to do next?

I wanted to make a hiding-place from which, myself unseen, I could, whenever I should choose to do so, see everything that went on inside Lenoir's room.

Although he made a point of coming home at midnight, or soon after, Lenoir rarely retired to bed till a couple of hours later. Listening in the silence and darkness, I could hear him at intervals moving about his room long after everybody else was in bed, and all the lights in Winckworth Street but his own were extinguished. The question was, in what way did Pierre Lenoir occupy himself during those two hours? What did he find to do at that time of the morning? This was the problem I had set myself to solve, and the examination of Lenoir's room was but a preliminary step towards that end.

The first thing I did, the day after my visit to the Frenchman's room, was to send Tim out to buy a step-ladder of a certain height. This was readily obtained, and when Tim brought it I found that, as I stood on the second step from the top, my head nearly touched the ceiling of my room. I now proceeded to mark out, on the surface of the wall that divided my room from Lenoir's, a space measuring twelve inches in a straight line from the ceiling downwards, and twenty-four inches across the base.

As soon as Lenoir had gone out for the day I instructed Tim, in the first place, to strip the paper off the space thus marked out, and, in the second place, to carefully remove a couple of feet of the elaborate foliated cornice, which, as already stated, ran round the top of the room, and extended to a depth of six inches down the walls. This done, Tim's next job was to pick away the plaster from off the marked space till the bare bricks were exposed to view. The next thing was to remove the two top tiers of bricks for a space of twelve inches out of the twenty-four, and yet leave intact and unbroken the cornice and plaster work on Lenoir's side of the wall. This proved more easy of accomplishment than I had dared to hope. The mortar with which the bricks had been laid was rotten with age, crumbling almost at a touch, and was easily prodded out of the interstices between the bricks by means of the iron skewer which Tim made use of for that purpose. When this was done a little careful manipulation enabled me to remove the bricks one by one, till half a dozen of them were taken out and laid on the floor. The plaster on the opposite side of the wall could now be seen, and the most difficult part of our task was yet before us.

Next afternoon, when Lenoir had gone out for the day and hardly anyone was left in the house, Tim, having unlocked the door by means of my duplicate key, took the step ladder and boldly planted

it and himself in the Frenchman's room, while I took up my position close to the opening in the wall of my room. Taking an instrument which I had made for the purpose, Tim inserted the point of it between two of the leaves of the cornice, and pressed it forward till it pierced clean through the plaster behind, so that its point became visible to me on the other side. The tiny hole thus made was carefully enlarged by scraping with the knife at the plaster till an irregularly-shaped orifice about two inches in diameter was cut out. A second hole was cut a few inches farther on in the same way. The result was that from my side of the wall, through the opening just made, I had a clear view over about two-thirds of the Frenchman's room, while it was next to impossible for him to detect the openings from his side, they being cut out behind the foliated work of the cornice, and consequently all but invisible from below. It was, in fact, as though I were looking out from behind a screen of leaves, only the leaves in this case were made of plaster of Paris. As soon as I was satisfied that there was nothing more to be done, I plugged up the holes with cotton wool for the time being. Tim brought back the ladder and carefully swept up every speck of plaster that had fallen on the floor of Lenoir's room. Then we relocked the door and waited for midnight.

As soon as twelve o'clock had struck I took up my position on the ladder and removed the plugs of cotton wool. The lamp in our room was then extinguished, and Tim coiled himself up in an easy-chair, waiting till he might be wanted. We had already provided ourselves with slippers made of felt, so that our movements might not be heard. By-and-by Lenoir came home. On entering his room he locked the door behind him, as he always did. Then he struck a match and lighted his lamp. Then he flung off his coat and waistcoat—the night was warm—and sitting down with the air of a man thoroughly tired out, he began to smoke. After a time he produced a bundle of letters from his pocket, and read them through one after another. All this was clearly visible to me from my eyrie close to the ceiling. Not only could I see his every movement, but the varying expressions that crossed his face were plainly to be seen. At half-past one he went to bed.

Two more evenings passed without anything of consequence taking place. On both occasions Lenoir amused himself with a pack of cards, shuffling and cutting them time after time, his object apparently being to ascertain how often out of a given number of times he could succeed in turning up an ace. But on the fourth evening my patience was rewarded. He got home rather earlier than usual and apparently in high good humour with himself, judging from the way he kept whistling and singing under his breath. Coat and vest having been flung aside as usual, and the inevitable cigarette lighted, he went to the window and satisfied himself that the venetians were so arranged that nothing which went on inside the room could be seen

from over the way. Then he went to the door and made sure that it was really locked. His next proceeding was a singular one.

The thought had struck me more than once that Lenoir's bedstead, as an article of furniture, looked considerably out of place among its shabby surroundings. It was made of mahogany, in the heavy old-fashioned style not often seen nowadays. The posts that supported the foot of it were especially substantial and solid-looking. Going down on one knee in front of one of these pillars, Lenoir with his finger and thumb drew out of its socket the circular piece of mahogany that covered one of the screw holes of the bedstead. Then selecting one very small key from several others on a ring that he drew from his pocket, he inserted it into a tiny keyhole in the woodwork of the bedstead, hitherto hidden behind the piece of mahogany which he had just removed. As he turned the key I heard a faint click, and the next moment he pulled open a little door in the lower part of the bed-post, which, turning on invisible hinges, exposed to view a recess or small cupboard cut out of the substance of the wood. From this recess he drew a roll of something that was covered with leather and carefully tied up. Then going to the table he sat down, drew the lamp closer to him, and proceeded to unfasten the roll, the contents of which proved to consist entirely of bank notes. He rubbed his hands, and chuckled to himself, and nodded his head at the notes as soon as he got them unrolled. "Ah! ha! here we are again, mes amis," he said. Then taking pen and ink and a sheet of paper, he proceeded to put down certain particulars concerning the notes, probably their numbers and value, turning them over one by one carefully and tenderly. Then he tied them up in their leather covering as before, put them back in the recess, relocked the little door, and replaced the piece of mahogany over the screw-hole. Then he rubbed his hands and chuckled to himself again. "To-morrow night," I heard him say, though he hardly spoke above a whisper, "he promised to come, and he won't break his word. Then I shall be rich—rich—rich!"

I could hardly doubt that the notes I had just seen were those which had been stolen from Imray, and for the sake of which he had been murdered, but how was I to make myself sure of that fact? Early next morning, some hours before Lenoir was in the habit of rising, I hunted up Sergeant Smith and had a long consultation with him. Unknown to himself, Lenoir was watched that day, from the moment of his leaving the house till the moment of his return. Acting on Smith's advice, I took up my position on the ladder this evening a couple of hours earlier than usual. Lenoir came home at eleven, a most unusual proceeding with him, and brought with him a bottle of cognac. Having lighted his lamp, he took the roll of notes out of its hiding-place and stuffed it, for the time being, under his pillow. Hardly was this done when I heard a low, peculiar whistle. Lenoir heard it also. He went quickly downstairs,

opened the front door, and presently came back, followed by a stranger. The bottle of cognac was opened and the contents approved of, and then the two men sat down to business, one on each side of the little table, with the lamp between them. They spoke in low tones, and in French. The stranger was there to buy the notes, the numbers of which were known, but which he presumably had the means of forcing into circulation, either on the Continent or across the Atlantic. The question which he and Lenoir were arguing now was simply one of price. At length they came to terms, and the roll of notes was produced. The stranger checked them off carefully against a list which he had brought with him, and then put them away into an inner pocket. "The gold is at my lodgings," I heard him say. "Come with me, and you can have it at once." "Why didn't you bring it with you?" asked Lenoir, sulkily. "It was too heavy," said the other, laconically. "Besides ——" "You did not care to trust yourself here with so much hard cash about you," sneered the Frenchman, as he took up his hat. The stranger only laughed and lit another cigarette.

Lenoir then extinguished his lamp, and the two men went downstairs together and let themselves out at the front door, but only to find themselves next moment in the arms of Sergeant Smith and three of his men, who had been lying in ambush for them. They were taken to the nearest police-station and searched. The notes proved to be those which were stolen from Imray, and in one of Lenoir's pockets was found a ring—the ring, originally mine, which I had exchanged with my friend for his the night we entered into that foolish compact.

Lenoir was examined before a magistrate and committed for trial, but three days later he contrived to commit suicide in his cell. The ingenious stranger, on whom the notes were found, had a term of penal servitude meted out to him for his share in the transaction.

I have nothing more to add, except that Tim is well and prosperous. Nothing would suit the lad but going into the police force as soon as he was old enough. He has risen to be a sergeant already. His ambition is to become a superintendent, have a fine horse to ride about on, and assist Royalty to open Parliament.

ENSIGN RANSON.

I SCARCELY remember the starting point of our conversation, though its scene rises up before me vividly as memory touches those magic plates which she keeps stored up in her mysterious chamber.

There were several young people gathered in Mrs. Martin's "parlour." Probably there was not another old lady in London had such a "parlour." From the long deep windows, the sloping walls, the low ceiling, and the chirping of birds, to say nothing of the scent of wall-flowers and musk, one fancied oneself in the ground-floor apartment of some quaint country cottage. In fact, it was a room on the topmost story of a grand old house in an old city square.

In that house Mrs. Martin had spent the last happy married days of her early womanhood, and there it was her wish to remain till she died. The house was far too large and too costly for a widowed woman's sole occupation, and so she had retreated, up and up, until she reached a solitude and a silence which the occupant of many a country High street might have envied. A perfect curiosity was her little habitation, its walls covered with pictures, its corners bright with dainty old china, its whole replete with every simple comfort. The old lady herself rarely went out now, but she did not lack visitors. There were some with great names and great powers who, in the world of fashion, found no temptation to forget their old friend; and there were many more, bright saucy lads and sweet enthusiastic girls, who found with her a refuge and a rest, where they could flutter their incipient wings safely and happily.

I can only remember that, at that time, some great trial was running its course, and all England was eager for the sight of the evening papers, which one of us had brought in, and the contents of which we had been all eagerly discussing, rashly giving our decided judgments on points over which the jury of twelve "good men and true" would have to spend many an hour of weary consideration.

One witness came in for our special animadversion. In her cross-examination some question had been put to her which she had declined to answer, and on appealing to the judge whether she was compelled to do so, had received an answer in the negative.

"We all know what that means," was the dictum of our juvenile leader, in which we all heartily concurred. "If what she must have answered would have been to her credit, she would not have hesitated, whether the question was justifiable or not. We may be sure that her answer would probably have evoked some further question, with results still more discreditable to her."

There was quite a little chorus of assent on this point; only Mrs. Martin was quite silent, and gave her knitting-needles a peculiar shift, which we had long learned to recognize as what would be described in parliamentary language as "murmurs of dissent."

"Don't you think so, too?" asked one of us, turning to the old lady with that deference which we always felt to be due to her, even when her wisdom differed from that of our contemporary Solomon.

"My dear, it may be so—but it may not," she answered. "I know a little story on this very point. I knew a gentleman who was present when the incident happened."

We were all attention. A story was not to be slighted, even when told to prove ourselves in the wrong.

"Well," said Mrs. Martin, "many years back, long before I was born, and that is nearly sixty years ago, a young man came out of a little house at the eastern end of a town by the sea. There was plenty of life and gaiety at the other end of the town, which was enlivened by one or two barracks, a fort, and a castle. But the eastern end was very poor, and would have been quite lonely but for the fishermen and their boats. The house from which the young man came was beyond even this homely bustle, and was little more than a wooden hut, tarred to defend it from wind and weather. Its only near neighbour was a huge windmill whose gaunt arms were almost over its humble roof; and though its windows and doorstep were clean and its curtains white, it was clearly a very poor place, where none but very poor people would live.

"But the young man who came out was in the full dress of a military officer, though that was screened from a first view by the long grey cloak which the wild March wind made so necessary. He looked back and waved his hand toward the little house, as if he knew that somebody there was watching him, though certainly nobody could be seen from the outside. And then he turned and struggled against the strong gale which blew in from the sea.

"He was quite young, and his face was finely cut, and would have been pleasant but for a look of stern and painful sorrow, not unmixed with bitterness, which seemed strangely incongruous with his years and his dress.

"He walked on quite through the town. There were few people taking exercise for pleasure in that rough weather, and the crowd of shipping in the Downs made the seaward view almost less lonely than the shore. It was a very simple little town, with red-tiled, decent dwelling-houses crowded forward towards the sea, as if their inmates wanted to watch the boatmen and fishers from as near a point as they might. Wherever the houses broke apart, one caught glimpses of a wild, flat country, dotted here and there with weird trees in Indian file; and the youth looked wistfully towards these desert fields, as if he would fain have struck away across them, instead of going on, as he did, towards the grim old fort.

"Yet there, it was clear, festivity was going forward, and friendly voices greeted him as he passed the grey old portal. And then, over his stern, sad face he dropped a mask of gaiety, and though he relapsed into silence at times, he was as polite and conversible as the best of them.

"There was preparation for a dinner party in the fine stiff old hall, with its rows of military portraits, and its dingy blood-stained banners. The castle, the barracks, and the fort itself had eagerly furnished guests to welcome the visitor of the day, a grand old General recently returned from honourable victories in the south of Europe.

"To our ideas of to-day," said Mrs. Martin, shaking her dear, white-capped head, "there was perhaps a great deal in that dinner-table conversation which ought not to have been. We have left off openly despising our then enemies the French, or speaking of any foreign allies much as if they were vermin, whom it was our good pleasure for the time being to support and protect. Let us not be afraid to condemn our honourable grandfathers in that wherein we think they were wrong. Only let us humbly remember that, strive as we may, we ourselves shall still say and do many things which, as we believe in God and progress, our still more fortunate descendants will characterise as ill-judged and perhaps wicked. We can but do our very best according to the light which is vouchsafed to the world in our day.

"After dinner, when ceremony was fairly thawed, the good old General in the kindliness and pride of his heart displayed a little box, which had been given to him by some grandee of Spain. I think it must have been too small for a snuffbox, and was probably one of those tiny trifles in which fashionable folk used to carry comfits and lozenges. At any rate, this box was set with diamonds and coloured gems of rare value, and it passed from hand to hand, flashing brightly in the lamp-light, while the old warrior told dread stories of his campaigns and of the daring and honour of his men.

"But suddenly, at the end of a story so thrilling that all heads had been craned towards him, while the military servants had thronged the door in rapt attention, the simple question was asked—

"'Where is the General's jewelled box.'

"Nobody knew: everybody said that he had silently passed it on to his fellow.

"The General rummaged his own pockets, lest it had found its way back to him and he had half consciously put it away. No, it was not there, and the brave old fighting face looked a little blank, and he murmured an excuse about 'how its loss would vex Lady Elizabeth.'

"'But it cannot be lost, General,' cried the officer in command of the fort. 'In this room it was a few minutes ago, and in this room it must be still. No gentleman, to his knowledge, has it in his possession. Let the servants at the door come in, though, to the best of my belief, not one of them has approached the table since

the box was brought out. Let the door be made fast, and let our search be thorough.'

"The candles were brandished to and fro, under the tables, under the chairs, round the table drapery. But from no point flashed out the brilliant beauty of the little box.

"'Still it must be here,' insisted the Commandant, 'and surely no gentleman will think his honour infringed if each in turn is asked to empty the contents of his pockets upon the table. I myself will be the first to do so. And the servants shall be the last.'

"Nobody could be expected to demur at so simple and sensible a proposal, backed as it was by the honest old officer instantly rattling out some crown pieces and a tobacco pouch, halfpence, and an old pipe. One after the other, the gentlemen on either side of the table followed his example, while sharp but not unfriendly eyes took eager note of strange pieces of personal property, and of dainty three-cornered notes, which might serve in the future as material for badinage and quizzing.

"But one drew back when the Commandant made his proposal. That young man who had walked in from the eastern end of the town dropped suddenly into his seat, whence he had risen in the first eagerness of the search. He passed his hand once or twice, nervously, through his hair, leaving it wild and straggling. And then he watched blankly, as the fruitless search drew nearer and nearer to himself. Within five minutes later, one or two of the officers were whispering to each other that any simpleton might have seen he did not expect it could be found.

"His turn was the very last. 'Ensign Ranson,' said the Commandant steadily. Ensign Ranson was certainly the first who had required to be called upon by name.

"The youth arose. And though the rest of his face was of a deadly whiteness, there was a spot of burning red on each cheek.

"'I don't think any gentleman should be asked to do this,' he said. 'I will give my word of honour that the box is not upon my person. I did not even keep it in my hands for a moment, I merely took it and passed it on.'

"'Too high-minded even to look at such gew-gaws,' sneered a spiteful old major, under his breath.

"'What men high in the service and old enough to be his father have already done, Ensign Ranson may safely do also,' said the Commandant, with a severity which was not unkindly, for young Ranson looked such a boy among the crowd of men, mostly stout and middle-aged; and the very suspicion suddenly lowering over him made the old officer think of his own lads, growing up, and not quite sure to do well for themselves after all.

"'I would never have asked it for the sake of my box,' observed the General, leaning back in his chair, and inwardly wondering what Lady Elizabeth would say of his carelessness.

"'But we ask it for the sake of our honour, General,' said the Commandant testily.

"'And we do not seem to have asked it needlessly,' whispered the spiteful major.

"'I will not do this thing!' cried the young Ensign passionately, and he looked wildly round the group as if he sought for one face that would comprehend and compassionate his misery. The face which looked the kindest was that of the old General himself, partly because it was not his hospitality which was outraged, partly because his genial nature was terribly shocked at finding anything of his the cause of such a wretched act of dishonour.

"'If the General will come with me to the ante-room,' said the young man, 'I will convince him that I have not touched his box. But this public exposure I will not submit to: our consent was not asked, and ——'

"'Certainly not!' 'Qut upon you!' 'General, you must not think of indulging his insolent request,' were the only sentences audible in the general hubbub that arose on every side.

"But the General rose. 'Gentlemen,' he said, quietly, 'I have never yet refused to listen to an enemy's petition. If you can satisfy me, sir, perhaps your comrades will take my word for you.'

"There was a murmur of very reluctant acquiescence, as the Ensign bowed and waited respectfully to follow the General to the ante-chamber. They had not disappeared behind the heavy curtains before all sorts of surmises were whispered round the table, guesses and hints so wild and so sinister as to do credit neither to the heads nor the hearts which originated them. The General and the Ensign stayed a longer time in the ante-room than would have sufficed to search the Ensign's pockets twice and thrice over. Not a sound could be heard. If any conversation was going forward, it must have been in a very low voice. The two gentlemen were away for nearly half an hour. All the military servants had been subjected to the Commandant's rigid scrutiny, and then dismissed. It might be as well that none but the 'gentlemen of the regiment' should know exactly what the end was. The delay grew first awkward and then awful. Even the whispers and rumours flagged into an intent and excited watching.

"At last the General and the Ensign came out. The Ensign's face was still very pale; what flush remained upon it had now mounted to the eyes. The old General was blowing his nose.

"'Ensign Ranson has thoroughly satisfied me,' he said, in his most genial voice. 'Never mind my box. It has vanished by one of those mysterious accidents which will happen sometimes. It will be found some day. And now, gentlemen, perhaps as we have been thus broken up we shall not settle down again very comfortably to-night. I hope we shall see you all at the Castle before Lady Elizabeth and I leave for London."

"'General,' said the Commandant, drawing him a little on one side, 'may I say that I sincerely trust your great generosity has not led you to ——'

"'Sir,' cried the old General, 'can you imagine that any mistaken idea of kindness would cause me to make you a companion of thieves? Gentlemen,' he went on, seeing that the company were not unaware of his little by-play, 'I pledge you my word that I am satisfied of Ensign Ranson's honour, and whoever dares to doubt him makes me to be his accomplice.'

"And the old General seized the young Ensign's arm and marched with him from the banqueting-room, while everyone sat dumb-foundered, till the spiteful major remarked that wonders would never cease.

"There was nothing more to be said. It was discovered that Ensign Ranson was not only invited to the Castle with the other officers, but was also asked there by himself, and actually was believed to have taken tea with the General and Lady Elizabeth in their deepest retirement. For the General's sake rather than his own, his brother officers continued on courteous terms with him; and he had always been so shy, and held himself so aloof, that perhaps he did not discover there was but little cordiality in their courtesy. And presently he exchanged into another regiment, which went on foreign service.

"He was away for several years, and in the fortunes of war he got rapidly promoted, so that when he returned home, though he was still young, he was no longer a poor nobody. When he landed in his own country he found a letter awaiting him, written by one who had sat near him at that memorable dinner-party, and who was now residing in the old Castle where the General and Lady Elizabeth had then been guests. This letter pressed him, in the warmest terms, to spend some of his earliest days in England at this very Castle, and so give many old friends who were in the neighbourhood an opportunity of meeting and congratulating him. Ensign Ranson, now Colonel Ranson, smiled a little strangely when he read this invitation, but he wrote a very polite reply and accepted it.

"Once more he sat in the stately old banqueting-room of the fort This time he had not walked in from the bleak east end of the town, but had been driven from the Castle in the chariot of the Castle's owner. But, as he took his seat in the chair of honour, he noticed that every face at the table was, in all its changes, familiar to him. All of the guests at the former dinner were not there. Many of those, indeed, he well knew, were sleeping on battlefields far away. But nobody was at this dinner who had not been at that other one.

"Once more the dishes were removed and the servants withdrawn. The guest of this evening was no wonderful story-teller, like the good old General, who had now passed to his rest. Colonel Ranson was as taciturn as Ensign Ranson had been shy, and he even let the conversation flag and never seemed to notice it.

"'Colonel,' said the eldest gentleman of the party, speaking with visible effort, and giving a slight cough to veil his embarrassment; 'Colonel, I think we all remember another time when we dined together here.'

"'Certainly, I remember it,' answered the Colonel, lifting his grey eyes, with a cool light in them.

"'Colonel, we fancy you think some of us did you ill justice then. At least, a lady says you felt so—Lady Elizabeth, the good old General's widow. If what we are going to do is in any way painful to you I hope you will pardon us, for we are only following her counsel. Colonel, there was a box lost that evening. Here it is.'

"Yes, there it was, gleaming once more in the light which danced gaily upon it. The Colonel looked at it calmly, and asked:

"'Where was it found?'

"His composure was exceedingly disconcerting. Another gentleman, feeling that the first had done his part, now took up the parable.

"'It was found in the very chair on which you are now seated, Colonel,' he said. 'You will remember that the General sat there on that night. It must have found its way back to the General's own hand, and in the interest and excitement of his own story-telling, he must have intended to slip it back into his pocket, which, if you recollect, was the first place where he sought it. Instead of that it evidently escaped the proper orifice, and dropped into the covering of the chair; that covering was very thick and heavy, and hung in lappets about his legs. Part of it was unsewn, and this box dropped between the damask and the lining, and remained there safely and unseen till the chair was re-covered last year.'

"'Gentlemen,' said the Colonel, with his accustomed calmness, though his lip trembled a little, 'I cannot wonder if some of you thought my conduct suspicious. I thank you heartily for showing me your brotherly delight that those suspicions were unfounded.'

"At the bottom of the table sat the spiteful old Major (he was on half pay now, and more spiteful than ever), and he thought within himself that there was no knowing whether Ensign Ranson had not taken some subsequent opportunity of getting rid of his dangerous booty into the hole in the damask, and that the mystery could not be called cleared up unless the Colonel had explained why he had demurred to the search. And this spiteful old Major would have said as much to his next neighbour, if he himself had not been so terribly deaf that he could not regulate his own voice between a confidential whisper and a mighty shout.

"The Colonel sat in silence for some minutes, and toyed with his wine-glass, as if he quite forgot where he was. Then he recalled himself with a start, and, drawing something from his own pocket, said quietly:

"'Gentlemen, I, too, have something to show you.'

"All pressed forward as he carefully unfolded the soft paper packet and laid something on the table. What was it? What could it be?

"It was the bleached skeleton of a chicken's wing.

"'Gentlemen,' he said, in that same quiet voice, which no longer sounded cold and stern, but rather full of strength and sweetness, 'when I was here before, I was a poor fatherless lad, owning nothing in the world but my poor little pittance of pay. I fear I was an eyesore to some of you. I think you felt that my appearance did not do justice to the dignity of our regiment. I believe I often looked rather shabby, but really I could not help it.

"'I had only one relation in the world, and that was my mother's sister. After my mother died she had been as a mother to me, but when our home was finally broken up, there was nothing for it but she must be a governess in a stranger's house. And she did her work courageously and cheerfully enough, till her health failed, and nobody wanted the service of a sick woman.

"'She had always been good to me. And we two had only each other in the world. I could not help her as she ought to have been helped, but my pay would at least provide her such a home and such maintenance as a poor working man can give to a poor working woman.

"'I took my aunt to lodge with the wife of the miller's man, in the little black cottage beside the mill. She was a kind, cleanly woman, though rough and plain in her ways, and my poor aunt used to call herself very happy there. But she could not eat the simple food my scanty means could procure. And the good landlady used to break my heart by suggesting that her appetite might be tempted by chickens or game, or such other luxuries beyond my utmost reach.

"'All the day of that memorable dinner-party my aunt had been very feeble and failing. When I left her I really wondered whether she would be alive when I saw her again. My soul revolted at the sight of dainties which were no good to me, and which I could not convey to her who seemed dying for want of them. Suddenly, a bright idea seized me. I took a letter from my pocket, and spread it on my napkin, and then, by an adroit movement, transferred the wing of a chicken from my plate to the paper, and thence smuggled it to my pocket.'

"The listening guests began to look at each other with enlightened eyes. The spiteful old Major felt that a very full explanation was being given—and he was glad he was deaf, that he need not hear it!

"'Gentlemen, you can all imagine my feelings when such unlooked for circumstances threatened to expose my poor little plan. Gentlemen, there are some of you who were, like myself, young then—whom it would have been as hard to meet after such a discovery as it would have been had I really stolen the jewels.'

"'Heaven forgive us, Ranson, but I can't say you are wrong,'

said one brave gentleman, who had been a fashionable dandy in those days, but who had a wife and six children now.

" ' Gentlemen, I did not fear the old man honoured and enriched by a grateful country. The men who have fought the best battles of life have ever a pitiful respect for the poor and the friendless. To him I could lay bare my poor little secret. But my place then was among the young—the young, who, having never conquered, always despise the defeated—the vain, giddy youths, extravagant with their fathers' money, and ——'

" ' Oh, come, Ranson,' cried one officer, ' it is your turn now with a vengeance. Please to remember that to-night we are the abject and the defeated—and be merciful.'

" The Colonel laughed. And they could not tell whether it was with good faith or subtle irony that he rejoined ' You are right,' and then went on.

" ' In that little room, yonder, I told my sad story to that good great man who is gone. And I folded up my queer treasure again, for I could not leave it behind to bear witness; and besides, having paid such a terrible price for it, I did not see why my aunt should not have it. And she ate it for her supper that very night; and next morning, almost as soon as it was light, there was the General hammering at the cottage door, with a basket of fowls and fruit carried in his own hand. And, then and there, I took this little chicken bone, and vowed that I would keep it till the snuffbox was found, and I myself was such a man among such men that none would smile at my poverty, or even despise my weakness.'

" That is my story," said good Mrs. Martin, deftly folding up the stocking which she had finished off while she related it. " That is my story, as told me by my own uncle, who was at both those dinner-parties. And it has always taught me not to be too sure that there can be but one sort of reason for secresy! My dears, we should never think evil while it is possible for us to imagine good. I believe that it is because God knows of so much goodness, which we never hear about, that He has patience with the world."

A DAY'S OUTING IN JAPAN.

HOW well I remember the tales of adventure and travel in the sunny tropics which formed the delight of my childhood! How the writers revelled in descriptions of coral islands fringed with a white beach glistening with shells, the tall palms, and the brilliant verdure that charm the eyes of a traveller under the Southern Cross! Not a hint of possible discomfort do these amiable enthusiasts ever give. According to them perfect happiness and freedom from the troubles of the world are all to be obtained in the lands of the tropics. So thought I, too: and at my earnest wish I entered Her Majesty's Navy at an early age—a wise regulation by which the young and ardent are enlisted in numbers. After arriving at years of discretion, the desire for seeing men and manners is by no means so eager. I soon found out that life in the South is not so free from care as my favourite authors had impressed on my youthful imagination. A hundred little petty annoyances make a man appreciate the benefits of a temperate climate when his good fortune has recalled him to any part of the world which enjoys that blessing.

It was my fate, in 187—, to serve in H.M. corvette *Lyre*, on the China station, and for the first twelve months we were ordered to the Straits Settlements. Now here, according to my young idea, should have been perfect bliss. We were almost on the line; vegetation and foliage were truly magnificent; while as for coral islands, their name is legion. Alas! for the imperfection of human nature. I absolutely loathed the place after some time. We sailed regularly from Singapore to Penang, and Penang to Singapore: only varying the amusement by a month's cruise in the Straits, and a diet of salt horse and biscuit. Nothing to eat but hard, tough beef, and the invariable fowl and curry, generally spoilt in the process of cooking by incompetent hands. Add to this a thirst which nothing could ever quench, and a heat so great that any attempt at exercise brought on directly an attack of prickly heat, and it may be imagined with what delight we welcomed our orders to proceed to the North. They arrived after our spending a year at what some mistaken people have called, for reasons best known to themselves, the sanatorium of the East.

The cool north-east monsoon was blowing fresh down the China seas, and the heavy swell accompanying the wind was so great that the old *Lyre*, with her shaky engines, only just managed to fetch Hong Kong with her last ton of coal. Once there, however, the delightful weather which prevails at that beautiful island during the winter months soon restored the health of our ship's company, which had suffered considerably from the exertions of boat-cruising in the

Straits, and after a couple of months spent in refitting, the *Lyre* sailed for Japan.

Nagasaki was the first port at which we called, but as we only stayed here long enough to take in coal, few of us were able to visit the pretty little town, which is one of the cleanest even in Japan. After leaving Nagasaki we sailed through the Straits of Simonosaki into the beautiful inland sea, the scenery of which almost surpasses description, and must be seen to be appreciated. At the eastern end of the sea is the port of Kobe, better known as Hiogo, which is open by treaty to foreigners, and here we anchored for a week to give the men general leave.

Such an opportunity of a run ashore was not to be sneezed at after a fortnight at sea, and a little party of us landed one morning for a couple of days' walk. Besides myself, there were the senior surgeon of the ship, Brown, and Wilson, the paymaster. As we did not know anything about the resources of the country, we took our provisions and liquor in the havresac which each carried on his shoulder; and a stout stick was an excellent assistant in climbing the hills, and a good defence in case of emergency.

Our ideas as to the state of the country and the safety of foreigners were very limited. The ship, whose relief we were, was at Yokohama, so that we had not been able to get any of the information from her which would assist us in our journey. The Doctor had had some little experience of the country some years previously: but at that time a man's life was not safe outside the limits of the foreign settlements, and the only glimpses which he had seen of the interior had been taken in the course of a few rides in large bodies well armed. However, we were assured at Kobe that we should be quite safe in walking as far as a place called Arima, about fifteen miles out, where we could spend the night. So we stepped out gaily on our journey, and, passing through the town, which lies in a plain between a lofty range of hills and the sea, soon found ourselves well on the road.

The path lay for miles through a deep gorge following the windings of the hills that bounded it on either side. Below us foamed a torrent, which found its course through the gorge into the sea, its bed dotted here and there with huge boulders, apparently carried down from the mountain during the rainy season. As we climbed along the broad, steep road that lay along the sides of hills covered with short grass and occasional fir-trees, we continually met peasants carrying the produce of their toil in neat bamboo baskets, slung at each end of a pole carried across their shoulders: as a milkman at home bears his cans. Then came priests with shaven heads, dressed in gaudy robes, and affably acknowledging the salutations of the passers-by. And the ladies!—what pen could do justice to their charms? There they were in dozens, in neat coloured garments, a bright sash round the waist, their little feet shod in

high wooden clogs to protect them from the mud of the roads, which reduced their progress to an ambling walk, their hair strained back over the forehead, and rolled round a large pin at the back of the head, and their bonny faces perfectly radiant with health and good-humour. There is a something about the Japanese girls which I can only describe by the nautical term of "fetching." It is not their beauty; for, measured by our standard of regularity of features, their broad, rosy faces and somewhat snub noses would scarcely be called even pretty. But there is a certain pleasant, lively way of talking which distinguishes them, and a perfect absence of shyness, that, coupled with their unfailing good-humour and piquant dress, exercise a perilous influence on the hearts of susceptible foreigners. From one and all these people came the hearty salutation, "Ohayo, Anatta" (good morning, sir), whether from the gentleman travelling with his family and servants, or the poor peasant leading his pack-horse covered with jingling bells and laden with a burden that seemed immense compared with the little sturdy animal that bore it.

Fine weather and cheerful companionship have a very exhilarating effect on a pedestrian, and we stepped gaily along the steep road which for six miles ascended the mountain: only stopping occasionally to clamber down the rocks to the little bubbling stream, to get a draught of pure water with just a taste of whiskey to weather the animalcules. Then a little wayside tea-house gave a reasonable excuse for a halt, so we took off our havresacs, and reclined for half an hour on the clean white mats which nearly every Japanese house can boast.

Curiosity is a strongly marked characteristic of the Japanese, and in a few minutes we had a crowd around us, asking all sorts of questions about ourselves and our business, and critically examining our dress and personal appearance, although with perfect good-humour. Brown carried off the honours, partly from his knowing something of the language, but principally on account of a huge black beard which he sported. The natives of the East are by no means Esaus, and even the small amount of hair which can be grown on their faces is religiously shaved off till they attain ripe years. The less hirsute members of the party had to be contented with the honours reflected from the chief, who was the subject of much respectful inquisitiveness, especially from the female part of the crowd, who seemed to think that a man who could boast a beard like that must be a prince at least in his native land.

Refreshed by our short rest, we resumed our climb, and soon reached the summit of the hills, where the road lay for some distance through fields of paddy and corn, only separated from each other by the narrow footpaths necessary for the tillers. Then came an abrupt descent through woods, following the course of a mountain torrent, which foamed through a deep cleft in the rocks far beneath, almost hidden from sight by the dense overhanging foliage of trees and

shrubs. Then across a stone bridge, through a little village which lay snugly ensconced in a valley between lofty hills, and we ascended the steep road beyond, singing a lively song, which brought the people out in dozens to have a peep at the foreigners. After climbing for a couple of miles up this hill, we found, on enquiring from some passing peasants, that we had mistaken the road, so we had to retrace our steps to the village we had left, where we found the proper path with some difficulty. It was a great contrast to the fine road we had left, being ankle deep in mud in many places, and we had repeatedly to cross and recross a shallow brook on stepping stones so slippery that I always preferred getting my feet wet to risking the falls which my companions got once or twice. Another stiff climb along a narrow path through a thick wood, and then an abrupt descent brought us to the little village of Arima, which lies in the deep basin of the hills.

We soon found our way to the temple at which we intended to stop, and entering the gate amidst a vociferous barking from all the dogs of the village, we were received by a person with a shaven head, who knelt down on the mats, and, touching the floor three times with his forehead, bade us welcome. At the first sound of this person's voice we started, and looked at each other in surprise. An animated discussion ensued as to the sex, but it was soon settled by the old priestess herself—as she turned out to be. Nothing could exceed her attentive kindness. She bustled about, arranging our clothes and bags, and bringing hot water to wash our feet. I incautiously intrusted my boots to her care, making signs that she was only to dry them; but she executed the commission a great deal too faithfully, for next morning I found that she had baked them till they were as hard as brickbats. Wilson and I busied ourselves in preparing a room, in which we got the old woman to place a hibachi (or charcoal stove), with the help of signs and a dictionary, while Brown made a foraging expedition into the village, whence he returned in great triumph, accompanied by a "posse comitatus" bearing bottles of Bass, and eggs and potatoes sufficient for a meal.

We were quite ready for dinner now, if dinner were only ready for us; so we took our bacon and showed it to the old lady, who examined, it curiously. Calling her husband, a burly old priest, she held a solemn consultation with him, at the end of which she returned it with a polite bow, intimating that she did not know anything about it. What was to be done? For, strange to say, neither of us knew anything of the mode of cooking the stuff, which we now regretted bringing. At last the Doctor heroically announced his intention of attempting the feat, and soon he had the old priest hard at work fanning the charcoal fire, while the bacon frizzled in a pan on top. A tantalizing smell soon pervaded the house, and matters began to look more cheerful. Wilson and I were laying out a newspaper for a cloth, and arranging our little stock of beer on the table, when we

fancied we smelt something burning. We went out to the cooking room, where we found Brown in his shirt-sleeves, energetically shaking the pan, and encouraging the priest, who was furiously fanning the fire. A faint odour, as of soot, was beginning to make itself perceptible.

"Don't you think it's done?" I observed.

"Oh, no," answered Brown. "Fry till brown, it says in all the cookery-books, and the blessed stuff is quite white yet. Fan away, Johnny."

So saying, he gave the pan a brisk shake, that sent all the fat into the fire, and raised a tremendous blaze, nearly setting the old priest alight. With some difficulty we persuaded our energetic "chef" to discontinue his operations, while we examined the bacon to see whether it was done. Alas! it was a mere calcined fragment that fell to pieces on being touched with a fork.

"I tell you what it is," observed Brown, "there's something radically wrong in the state of Denmark. If that bacon was good, it wouldn't have frizzled up in that absurd manner, so I vote we have a stew. I saw some beef in a shop down the village, and we can kill a fowl, and the old woman has vegetables galore."

Nothing better seemed to offer, so we went out for the beef, and putting it into the pot with a fowl cut up into pieces, we soon had it boiling merrily and once more diffusing odours tantalizing to hungry men.

"I think this will be a success," said Brown, as he lifted the lid for the fiftieth time to inspect progress. "Suppose you fellows make a Welsh rabbit while this is finishing."

Wilson and I hastened to do this, and had just accomplished it to our satisfaction, when the abominable odour of soot again commenced. We rushed out, and found the Doctor ruefully looking into the pot, whence the evil smell was evidently proceeding.

"It was getting on so well," he said, sorrowfully, "when I thought some rice would improve it, and I fancy it must have consumed all the water, for I can't see any liquid at all. But it isn't much the worse, and it's better than nothing."

However, after a sniff at the obnoxious article, Wilson and I respectfully declined partaking of it, and contrived to broil a little bacon for our own dinners: while the Doctor bravely consumed his own stew, with many a growl at our dainty stomachs that couldn't put up with a little burning. By the time we had finished our long-delayed meal, darkness had come on, and the old lady brought in some rude lamps which shed a dim religious light over the scene. So we stretched ourselves on the floor round the charcoal stove, smoking and sipping some hot grog which we had managed to brew. Two or three of the neighbours had come in to have a peep at the foreigners, and were squatting on the mats near the door, whispering to each other what were evidently remarks on our dress and

manners. Still, they were all so cheerful and good-humoured, that, although unaccustomed to be watched in this manner, we allowed them to remain there peaceably; and getting a pack of cards out of a havresac, commenced a game of cribbage. In the village occasional bursts of noisy laughter and the sound of musical instruments showed that some of the good people were intent on enjoying the night. The rain, however, had come down so heavily that an exploring expedition which we had planned had to be abandoned, and after we had finished our game, we ordered some of the native spirit (saki), and endeavoured to extract information of the country out of our visitors: a rather difficult matter with our limited knowledge o the language.

At length we began to feel sleepy, and as we could not make our friends understand that we wanted to retire, we had to lie down and go through the pantomime of profound slumber, when they were good enough to leave us. The old priestess bustled about the room, laying down thick quilted robes for us to sleep on (popularly known as flea-bags), and others to cover us during the night. The paper screens which divided the room from the outer air were drawn, and wooden partitions fixed up outside these. Then the old lady, after insisting, in spite of our remonstrances, on tucking in the flea-bags round us, wished us good-night with profound obeisances, and we were left to ourselves. As usual in a tea-house, a lamp was placed in the room, consisting of a long wick in a saucer of oil, protected from wind by a paper screen, which shed a feeble light on the three prostrate forms. For some time we lay quietly smoking and listening to the gentle murmur of the little stream which ran in front of the house, and then Wilson broke the silence by observing that the people we had met to-day seemed exceedingly polite and kind.

"Yes," said the Doctor, "they always were that, and yet it is not ten years ago that murder after murder was being committed on unfortunate foreigners. A man would as soon have committed suicide as done what we have been doing to-day. But then every native you met bore a sword, and was uncommonly ready to use it if you gave him any pretence for it. I hear they have gone quite on the other tack now, and are trying to meet foreigners on their own ground."

"They're honest, I suppose, in this house," said Wilson, "for I left my clothes and bag in the shanty outside."

"No doubt of that," answered Brown. "They are not like the heathen Chinee, who never loses a chance of picking and stealing."

"Yes," observed Wilson, thoughtfully, "he's a smart man, is John Chinaman. You need rise pretty early to get the better of him. I never did weather the heathens but once, and that was in my last ship, when we were at Hong-Kong in the winter of '6—. I had been dealing with Ah Foo, the bootmaker, for canvas shoes, and I was tolerably certain that I had paid for everything as I received it.

One day, however, I was rather taken aback, when master Ah Foo presented me with a bill for five dollars. 'Hullo, what b'long this?' said I. 'That b'long two pair shoes, my have catchee for master,' said the old rascal.

"'What thing you talkee,' I said in a rage. 'My makee pay all proper before.'

"'Master talkee my, can pay all proper by'm bye,' was the old rascal's reply. And the end of it was that, not having a receipt to show, I was compelled to pay the villain. But I thought to myself, I'll square yards with you some day, my friend, and very soon afterwards I did that same. I was in the dockyard, looking after some stores, when whom should I see but Ah Foo coming into the gate with a pair of boots under his arm.

"'Chin, Chin! Ah Foo,' I sang out, 'who b'long those boots?'

"'B'long Mister Lousee, master,' he answered. You must remember Jack Rouse, Brown: that was the nearest approach the Chinamen ever could make to his name. As he said this, a brilliant idea struck me, which I at once put into execution. I pulled a face as long as the main topgallant bowline, and said, sorrowfully:

"'What! you no have heard, poor Mr. Rouse have gone topside. He makee die this morning.'

"I thought the old rascal would have gone mad. He dropped the boots on the jetty, and stood staring at me with his cross-jack* eye rolling fearfully.

"'What thing!' he stammered out at last. 'Mr. Lousee talkee my catchee pair boots.'

"'He no wanchee boots now, Ah Foo,' I said in a tone of deep pathos, while I was almost bursting with laughter at his dismayed face.

"'But Mister Lousee no talkee wanchee die, he talkee my wanchee pair of boots!' he almost whimpered.

"I succeeded in persuading him, at length, that dead men had no occasion for boots, and he turned away to leave, muttering his grievance of a man dying after ordering a pair of boots, when I remarked carelessly—

"'Number one boots, Ah Foo?'"

"'Oh, number one,' he said eagerly. 'Suppose master like, can catchee, seven dollars.'

"'Now look here, Ah Foo,' I said sternly, 'my have found receipt for five dollars I pay you too muchee. Suppose you like to give me these boots, can do all right.'

"I showed him his receipt, and he admitted he owed me the five dollars, but demurred at letting me have the boots, saying that they cost him more than that. At length he consented, saying, with a groan, that he had lost a dollar over the job. I sent the boots off to the ship at once, and Ah Foo was leaving the yard very disconsolate, when he met Jack Rouse himself, who at once began

* Pronounced "crodgic"—nautical for a squint.

abusing him for not bringing the boots before. Poor Ah Foo thought it was a ghost at first, till Jack shook him. Then he saw the whole trick, and back he came tearing along the jetty in a furious rage to where I was standing.

"'What for you talkee lie pidgin,' he shouted: and was beginning to get abusive, when Rouse came up and some other fellows, and there was such a roar of laughter at poor Ah Foo's *boot*less anger, that he rushed out of the gate very crestfallen. I told him next time I saw him that I hoped it would be a warning to him; and I must say that for the future he was careful in his dealings with me. But even now you have only to ask him about Rouse's boots, and he gets very red in the face."

A snore was the only answer given by the Doctor to this tale, for he had fallen asleep during the recital: so Wilson, who seemed to be in a talkative mood, turned his attention to me.

"I remember when I was on the coast, in the old *Snorter*——" when fatigue overcame me also, and all was blank.

THE BEAUTIFUL.

One entrance to God's Temple was the gate
  Men called "The Beautiful," and to this day
We may find access there, since early, late,
  Open it stands to all who pass that way.
By the great teaching of the Beautiful,
  So lavishly around our pathway spread,
Whether we stoop the fair wild flowers to cull,
  Or gaze upon the stars above our head,
In everything He trains our hearts to learn
  This glorious Truth—seen, save where eyes are dim,
In flowers that bloom—in distant stars that burn,
  The Beautiful directly leads to Him!

THE WOOD-CUTTER'S WIFE.

By the Author of "The Charcoal-Burner."

I.

SHE had a child in her arms, a little creature, a year old, whose rosy face nestled on her shoulder, shyly hiding at the sight of a stranger.

"What can I do for you, Ernestine?" I asked.

"Oh, if monsieur would be so good as to come and see Louis, he has had a sad accident. This morning, cutting wood in the dawn, with scarcely light enough to see by, he ran a splinter into his hand, and now it is swelled terribly."

I saw by her face that the accident was worse than her words seemed to make it, so, bidding her sit down, I wrote a line to the good doctor of Saint Église, and sent a boy with it on my pony. Then I took a bottle of soothing liniment from my medicine-chest, and started with Ernestine for her husband's cottage. It was a good half league from the village; it lay just within the fringe of a great wood, which covered the hill beyond it, clothing the height to its summit in gold, and brown, and crimson. To the left were a few patches of cultivated ground, but away to the right stretched the bare bleak steppes of the Ardennes, covered only with a shaggy heath, that looked dark and murky in the autumn air. The eye roamed over the bare, brown hills, catching no glimpse of these narrow and verdant vales, which, like deep gorges, or chasms cut in the rock, lie hidden between the steppes. Thus the prospect all around the cottage, save where the many-tinted wood gleamed and glistened in the sun, was bleak and sombre beyond description.

"A cold spot, Ernestine," said I.

"Ah, monsieur should see it in winter, when the snow is on the ground, and every hill is white for leagues and leagues about us. Then, but for the wood behind, which gives some shelter, I think we should die of cold."

Louis, the wood-cutter, was a young man of thirty, handsome as health could make him, and bearing on his sunburnt face an expression of intelligence and refinement not often seen in the peasants of the Ardennes.

One little child sat on his knee, another knelt before the fire, blowing the embers into a flame. On a small table stood a brown loaf and a pot of chicory water, which the Ardennais drink for coffee. Like a picture, I saw the scanty breakfast and the wistful face of the wounded man, gazing into the fire gloomily. Then our presence startled him, and he turned towards his wife with a cheerful look.

"I am glad thou art come back, Ernestine. I cannot cut bread for the little ones with my left hand, and they are hungry; monsieur is welcome."

And, putting down the child, he gave me a chair by the fire.

A slice of dark bread and a cup of chicory water, without milk or sugar; this was the poor repast on which the children feasted; and I waited till the meal was over before I unbound the man's hand. I perceived at once that only the most skilful surgery could save the hand from amputation, or even render it a useful member again. As I looked up I caught the man's sad and earnest gaze riveted on my face. Then his eyes turned slowly on his wife and children.

"Winter is coming on, monsieur," he said wearily. "Will my hand be long in getting well?"

"I hope not, Louis," I answered, "but the doctor will be here soon; he will be able to tell you better than I."

Then, as Ernestine went into the little court to fetch wood, I leant forward and whispered to him, "Louis, I fear your hand will be disabled a long while. I fear you will be able to work no more this winter."

He glanced at me in a frightened way, and then dropped forward wearily, with his head resting on his left hand. "God help me," he said, in a despairing tone. "What will become of my wife and children if I can't work?"

"Your neighbours will help you, Louis," I replied, cheerfully; "do not despair." The wood-cutter's face flushed painfully.

"Beggary!" he murmured; "have I brought her to beggary?"

"Louis," I said, earnestly, "when they hear you are laid up, Ernestine's parents will surely relent."

He shook his head sadly. "I cannot think so, monsieur, and of my own will, I will never let her go to them again. No, not even if we are starving."

Ernestine came back now with the wood, and as she laid it on the fire her anxious glance fell first on her husband, then on me. Seeing our grave faces, her eyes filled with tears.

"Tell me the truth, monsieur," she said, pleadingly. "Is the hurt serious?"

I was saved the pain of replying by the arrival of the doctor, who set about his work instantly, with all care and tenderness. Poor Louis fainted ere the work was done. His young wife stood by, aiding him with calm courage, till she saw him sink and fall, then her tears burst forth, and a sharp cry of agony was wrung from her lips.

"Send her to your house for wine," said the doctor to me, in English. "She is better away."

Seeing it was for Louis, she accepted the task gladly, departing with a swift step on her errand.

The doctor looked after her graceful figure in some surprise, as though wondering why one so young and fair should be visited with so much sorrow, but his patient requiring all his attention, he asked no questions then. But two hours later, when seated by my fireside, he took his pipe from his mouth, and said, abruptly,

"She has the air of a lady, that girl—how is that?"

"The wood-cutter's wife?" said I. "Well, the reason is a love-story, which I'll tell, if you like to hear it."

The doctor nodded, and refilled his pipe.

"She is very young," he said reflectively. "She does not look more than twenty: and she is very pretty," he added, as he put his pipe between his lips.

"Ernestine is twenty-three," I replied. "She has been married five years, and she has, as you saw, three little children and a husband whom she loves dearly. Tell me what you think of him."

"I think that the poor fellow will have lockjaw, unless his symptoms greatly change between this and to-morrow."

"It is too horrible," I answered, shuddering. "You must stay here to-night, and do all you can to save him."

"I will try my utmost," he said, gravely.

"When I asked you what you thought of Louis," I resumed, "I meant did you think him a man for whom a woman might commit a romantic folly without repenting?"

"Repentance always comes after folly," said the doctor.

"At all events," I returned, "if Ernestine repents, she does not repine. I have known her for four years, and I have never once heard her complain, or seen her moody."

"Who is she?" asked the doctor.

"You will be surprised when I tell you. She is the daughter of Monsieur Sarrasin, the rich old notary of Trêves."

"Why, he is worth a million livres," exclaimed the doctor, in astonishment. "I had heard his daughter had made a strange match, but I did not know she had descended so low as this."

"Not so low as you think," I responded; "Louis's birth is quite as good as Ernestine's, but his father became bankrupt, and the young man, as soon as he came of age, handed over to the creditors the small fortune which he had inherited from his mother."

"Romantic humbug," observed the doctor—"the sort of thing that tells on the stage, or in a story, but in real life fails altogether."

"In Louis's case it certainly failed," I answered, "inasmuch as it paid nobody in full, and it left him penniless. By his mad act Louis has made himself the deepest sufferer of all. His father saw this, and, crushed by his bankruptcy, his wife's death, and his son's ruin, he hastened to retire from the world.

"Now, in the days when his foundries and his quarry were flourishing, Monsieur Sarrasin had been glad to talk of a marriage between his daughter Ernestine and the young Louis Dartôt. Both were only

children, and it was a favourite scheme of their respective parents to unite the great fortunes that each would have. But the quarry failed, the foundry was burnt down, and the confidential clerk of Dartôt and Co. falsified the accounts, and ran away to America with all the ready cash upon which he could lay his hands. Ruin followed, and Monsieur Sarrasin shut Louis Dartôt from his house.

"Louis, now utterly penniless, accepted a situation as clerk to a brewer, a rich man, but coarse and unfeeling to a strange degree. The chief in the establishment, to whom Louis came for orders, and who might be looked upon as his master, was the brewer's eldest son —a fellow in whom there lurked all the extravagant vices of a great city, mingled with the meanness and cruelty inherent in his blood. Louis was slow to discover that the man silently hated him; nevertheless, this discovery was forced on him at last, through countless petty slights, sneering words, and, in the end, outspoken insults. But he bore them patiently, for his father, paralytic and feeble before his time, was dependent on his exertions for daily bread and comforts; so Louis worked on, in enduring silence, and Henri Mathiste revelled hourly in cruel sneers and cowardly fault-finding.

"All this while Louis had caught no glimpse of Ernestine, except at church, and each Sunday, or saint-day, he fancied she looked paler and thinner; but she turned away her face when he regarded her, and clung closer to her keen-eyed father. Thus things went on for six months, and then Louis, returning one night over-worked and weary to his poor lodging, found his father lifeless in his chair. Since his ruin and his wife's death, the poor old man could scarcely have been said to live, and now that the feeble spark of life was really gone, his poor, pinched face was so little changed from the aspect it had worn for many weary months, that his son spoke twice to him, and waited for an answer, not believing he was dead.

"It was hard to go to work next day, carrying that heavy grief with him cold at his heart, and harder still to bear Henri Mathiste's insolence, feeling, as he did, that at such a time gentleness was his due, even from an enemy. But to-day, young Mathiste was in brutal spirits, and in the exuberance of his cruel gaiety he cast off all reticence, flinging his sneers and insults on Louis's grief with a sort of reckless pleasure.

"'So the old bankrupt is dead,' he said, aloud in Louis's hearing. 'Well, he has paid his debt there, at all events; he might cheat everyone else, but death he could not cheat.'

"'Monsieur, he is a creditor from whom there is no discharge,' returned the old clerk to whom he spoke, bowing with a troubled air.

"Louis wrote on in his ledger, silently, although the indignation swelling in his heart half stifled him.

"'Here, you Dartôt!' cried the young brewer, 'I suppose you'll be wanting a holiday to-morrow, won't you, to bury the old man?'

"'I bury my father at six to-morrow morning,' returned Louis, without looking up. 'I want no holiday, thank you.'

"'Whew!" whistled Mathiste, 'we bury him at six in the morning, like a beggar, do we?'*

"'Sir!' cried Louis, starting up in fury.

"But the old clerk pressed him down with one hand.

"'Is it worth your while to be angry?' he whispered.

"'No, indeed,' returned Louis; 'such a nature as his is worthy only of pity and contempt.'

"Seated, as he was, in an inner office, young Mathiste could only guess at these words, instead of distinctly hearing them. His face flushed with fury; this bankrupt's son, then, despised him.

"But he would scarcely do that when he struck his last blow.

"'You can do as you like about taking a holiday, Dartôt,' he said, in a sneering tone, 'but I intend to give all the other employés one, since to-morrow I sign my marriage-contract with Mademoiselle Sarrasin.'

"'It is false,' returned Louis, as, pale as death, he rose and confronted the tormentor.

"'You are polite, sir,' returned Mathiste, with great coolness, 'but I excuse you; your misfortunes earn my pardon. I believe you had pretensions to the lady yourself once, but of course she declined the honour of an alliance with the son of a swindler.'

"As the words left his throat, Louis sprang at him and knocked him down. Perhaps he would have pommelled him heartily, but for the old clerk, who in breathless horror dragged him from the body of the fallen bully and led him away.

"Now, in Belgium an assault is a serious offence, punished by imprisonment, not by fine only; luckily for Louis, the law requires *two* witnesses, and his enemy had but one, and he an unwilling one. For that same day Pierre Festin and Louis Dartôt both sent their resignations to Monsieur Mathiste the elder. The younger man, therefore, seeing where the old clerk's sympathies lay, thought it wisest to hold his peace concerning the blow that his rival had dealt him.

"In Pierre Festin's room, Louis clutched him by the arm, gasping breathlessly,

"'Is this true what the coward says—does she marry him?'

"'It is true, Louis; we have known it this month past, only no one has dared to tell you.'

"'Women are always cruel to the unfortunate; they fly to riches, as the vulture to carrion,' said Louis, bitterly, as he sank into a chair. 'Well, she has chosen a happy time in which to strike the blow. She signs her marriage contract on the day that I lay my father in the earth.'

"A sob burst from him, and he covered his face with his hands.

* Early funerals are the cheapest, in most Roman Catholic countries.

"Pierre Festin looked at him pityingly. 'I believe Mademoiselle Sarrasin has been coerced into this,' he said. 'I know she has been made to think strange things concerning you. I will undertake to carry a letter to her, if you will write it.'

"'I'll send her my congratulations on her marriage,' returned Louis, scornfully; 'I'll let her know what I think of her bridegroom.'

"He seized pen and paper, and poured forth some of the gall and despair and wounded love rankling in his heart. The letter must have been a strange mingling of reproach, sorrow, and passion; it must have been written in words that burn, since it so wrought upon the mind of the girl who loved him that, falling upon her knees as she read it, she thanked heaven she was not yet Henri Mathiste's wife.

II.

"LATE that night, as Louis Dartôt sat alone, cowering over his small fire, the door of his poor garret was opened softly, and there stood, framed by the dingy arch around her, a pale, shrinking figure, upon whom his eyes fell wonderingly. Slowly, they gathered in the truth, and his lips, in pain and astonishment, uttered her name.

"'Ernestine!'

"'I am come,' said the girl, falteringly. But overcome with terror at the step she had taken she stopped and sank to the ground, trembling and weeping.

"'Why are you here, mademoiselle?' asked Louis Dartôt, coldly. 'You would be ruined in the estimation of your fiancé if he became aware of this strange visit to me.'

"'You are cruel,' cried Ernestine, as she lifted her tearful face from her hands.

"'Pardon me, mademoiselle, it is you who are cruel. On the eve of your marriage with another, you come to the man you have forsaken, to madden him with a sight of your face. You come to see his abject poverty, to see his misery, his grief. Yonder, in that dim corner, lies my father, a man whom you honoured and loved when he was rich. As for me, mademoiselle, you do right to despise me, because for a whole year I have borne the taunts and insults of that reptile whom to-morrow you take for your husband. But take care, lest as I lay my father in the grave I should think of you in your bridal finery, and curse you!'

"Jealousy burneth like a fire,' and in its scorching pain Louis spoke madly and cruelly. For a moment, when his torrent of words ceased, no sound broke the silence save the low sobs of Ernestine. Then she said, in a broken voice, 'You wrong me, Louis. I was told you had forgotten me; they said you lived here with—with—in a word, they slandered you vilely, and I, seeing you never wrote to me, never strove to see me, I believed them. Then

I thought, since you loved me no more, there only remained for me on earth my duty to my parents. To fulfil that I yielded to their wish, and permitted them to arrange this terrible marriage with Henri Mathiste. But you little know how long I resisted, nor in what grief and tears I consented; neither can you guess how my indifference to him and my love for you has chafed the man they chose for me.'

"'This, then, is the secret of Mathiste's hate to me,' said Louis. 'And do you mean to marry him, mademoiselle?'

"'No, never,' answered Ernestine. 'It was to tell you so that I have dared to come here to-night. When I read your letter, I thought that surely you still loved me, and I felt that neither poverty, sickness, nor death could separate you from my love. But now—now that I hear your bitter words and see that I am unwelcome, I am sorry that I have troubled you.'

"She rose, blinded by tears, and put out her hands, gropingly, towards the door. At that instant Louis sprang to her side, and seized her.

"'Ernestine,' he said, imploringly, 'forgive me! Much sorrow has made me mad.'

"Her head dropped upon his shoulder as he spoke, and they wept together.

"'Ma tendre amie,' murmured Louis, as he held her in his arms, 'you have risked your name for me, and what can I do for you in return? Can I ask you to share this misery? No; I cannot be so selfish, so cruel. We must say farewell, Ernestine, and for ever. You will marry some good man, and forget me.'

"'No, no,' she cried, 'we will wait, we will hope. Here, in the presence of your dear father who plighted us to each other, I swear I will never be any man's wife but yours. You will win success in time, and my parents will consent to our marriage.'

"There was no hope in Louis's heart as he listened to her words; to him all was blank poverty and despair; and he felt now he had been impulsive and selfish in disturbing her peace. Both knew that her rash deed, if not kept a strict secret, would bring on her ruin and disgrace.

"He drew her near that silent presence that had witnessed this interview, and uncovered the calm, white face. Unable to bear the sight without a burst of grief, he leant over the bed in tearless agony, while Ernestine's eyes overflowed, and, seeking to comfort him, she pressed her lips upon his cheek.

"'My only friend,' he said gently, 'surely, knowing such a witness as this was here, the cruelest tongue would not dare to slander thee.'

"As he uttered the words there was a sudden noise upon the stairs; the door was flung open and there entered, white with fury, Ernestine's father and the elder Monsieur Mathiste, followed by an excited crowd.

"'Infamous girl,' cried Monsieur Sarrasin, as, with clenched hands, he advanced towards her, 'I did not believe you were so lost.'

"'I told you she was here,' exclaimed Monsieur Mathiste, eagerly. 'Mademoiselle, you will consider your marriage with my son broken off, if you please.'

"'I have written to him already to say so,' returned Ernestine, coldly. 'Father, listen to me!'

"'Listen to you! I see you here, is not that enough?' roared Monsieur Sarrasin, in an agony of fury and distress.

"'Monsieur,' said Louis, quietly, as he laid his hand upon his father's cold brow, '*here* is the witness of our interview. Your daughter has not been alone with me in this chamber, your dead friend has been with us.'

"Any other man would have been touched, but Monsieur Sarrasin was a miser, and a lover of money. So he turned away, dragging his daughter with him by the hand. It was Monsieur Mathiste who answered Louis's appeal.

"'My friend,' he said to Monsieur Sarrasin, 'I am willing to believe the young man. Let us endeavour to hush up the matter. For my part, if mademoiselle will explain wherefore she came hither, and if she will promise never to speak to this person again, I will sign the contract to-morrow with pleasure. I know my son has set his heart on it.'

"'Speak, Ernestine,' cried her father. 'What madness made you come to this place?'

"'I came,' she said, 'to tell Louis that I would not marry Monsieur Henri Mathiste, and that I had been deceived with false reports regarding him, else I would never have given my consent to such a marriage. Monsieur,' she continued, addressing herself to Henri's father, 'I cannot give you the promise you desire, for I have just sworn, in this sacred presence, never to forsake Louis Dartôt while I have life.'

"The effect of her bold words is past telling. Most of the by-standers, judging according to their *own* measures, immediately set her down as utterly lost. Such a defiance of all propriety could only mean that she had already forfeited honour and duty.

"Monsieur Mathiste bowed to her, and departed without a word.

"'You have ruined my daughter's prospects,' cried Monsieur Sarrasin; 'there is no refuge for her now but a convent. If I were a younger man I should blow your brains out.' So saying, he dragged away his weeping daughter, paying no heed to her prayers and expostulations.

"It is impossible to describe the hubbub this affair made. Enough, that the poor girl was shunned, and her character was irretrievably ruined. She bowed before the storm without a murmur, as she knew that in breaking through the rules of etiquette, to visit her lover in his dire affliction, she had sinned beyond forgiveness in the eyes of the world.

"Hearing these slanders, Louis presented himself at her father's

house, and formally demanded her hand without a dôt. His proposal was refused.

"'Do you want to beg together?' asked Monsieur Sarrasin.

"And now the poor girl began to die slowly. She had fancied she had courage to bear the tide of slander and shame, this terrible isolation and hissing of tongues; but her health and spirits sank before it, and she presented to the unpitying world a white, woeful face, bearing the seal of death on its youthful brow.

"The sight maddened Louis Dartôt, but it did not enable him to coin money. At length a hurried line reached him saying just this:—

"'Henri Mathiste has demanded my hand again. My father gives me two alternatives—to accept him or to enter a convent. After all that has been said it would be a shame, a dishonour in me, to marry any man but you. If you will not take me, I choose the convent.'

"That night Louis Dartôt and Ernestine Sarrasin created that worst of French scandals—an elopement.

"It was a poor wan shadow that Louis took into his arms as she crept out guiltily from her father's door; and for many days she lay on the pallet bed in his bare lodging, hanging between life and death, exhausted with the patience of sorrow.

"Then followed her parents' enforced consent to her marriage, together with the settlement of the wretched pittance of four hundred francs a-year on her and her children. After this the young couple escaped from the scorn of the world and settled in the solitude of the Ardennes. Here Louis has cultivated a little land, and eked out a living by wood-cutting and other labours. He finds it a happier, freer life, he says, than toiling in an office. And, above all, what renders it dearer to him, is the fact that there is no cheating, no chicanery in it. There is not a lie in all the woods, he says; and, in digging up the earth, his spade never shows him the meanness, the insolence, the trickery, that man flung before his eyes when he strove to earn his bread like a *gentleman* in the crowded city.

"That's the love story, doctor."

III.

My friend knocked out the ashes from his pipe, refilled it, and placed it between his lips; then, with the first slow puff that issued therefrom, he remarked sarcastically—"And a very pretty kettle of fish it is. Is there no reconciling the old folks to these simpletons?"

"They have tried it at the birth of each child," said I, "but always vainly. There would be hope of anyone else but a miser; but, you see, the loss of his child is the saving of money to him, while reconciliation will mean spending it."

"He'll have to expend some now," answered the doctor, "or let his child die. That man will be helpless all the winter."

Well, I went to Tréves, and tried to soften the old miser, and the doctor tried also, and our prayers beat against a rock.

"She has deserted me and her mother in our old age," he said, "and now she wants my money. I tell you she shan't have it. I am glad the fellow is ill. I hope he'll die."

That was all I gained, and I went home with a sorrowful heart.

The winter came down upon the Ardennes early, and in grim earnest. Soon there was not a blade of grass or a green spot anywhere to be seen; the whole earth wore a mantle of snow, white, glistening, and durable. As the weeks went on the eye ached with the constant whiteness, and the ear longed for some sound—some note of bird or cry of beast to break the dead stillness of the winter. The cry came at last. Drawing nearer and nearer through the great woods, towards the borders where cottages and homesteads lay, it came—the cry of the famished wolf. Sometimes in pairs, sometimes in packs of three or four, these hungry prowlers came cringing round lonely dwellings, seeking what they could devour. In the still, frosty, starlight nights the sudden sight of their dusky forms passing swiftly, stealthily, over the snow, startled the solitary wayfarer from his security with a strange shudder of fear.

Through all this hard and bitter weather Louis Dartôt lay ill in his bed, or sat by the wood fire, weak and helpless. He had escaped the horrors of lockjaw, but suffering and anxiety brought on fever, and, prostrate with this, he seemed a dying man. The anguish of his mind and the miseries of poverty kept the fever in his veins, which riches and ease might have driven away. In vain neighbours helped and friends sent wine and nourishment: such aids could not make head against the strong tide of misfortune rolling over the hapless family. It was a painful task to go to the cottage and witness the sorrows of that bitter winter. The sick man in his bed, the two tiny children shivering over the fire, the little baby in its mother's arms, with pinched face and listless eyes full of pain, and, worst of all, the haggard, weary looks of the young wife herself, who, worn with woe and watching and over-work, went about a very ghost.

I had not told her of my vain attempt to soften her father's heart. I thought it best to spare her that pain. Perhaps this secrecy was unwise. I thought so when one day I found Louis sitting up in bed, with flushed face and eager eyes, reading a letter.

"She is gone!" he said, falling back on his pillow; "they will never let her return to this misery; they will keep her with them, and I shall die here alone. Take the children to her when I am gone. They will not be so hard as to shut their door against the little ones."

From the wildness of his eyes I thought him wandering in mind,

till he placed the letter in my hand and I read a few dry lines from Monsieur Sarrasin, coldly proposing to receive his daughter again in his home, on the condition that she came with only her youngest child, leaving her husband and the others to their fate.

"She cannot have accepted this inhuman proposal?" I exclaimed.

The unhappy invalid made no answer, but I saw his face change to the hue of death, as he turned it on the pillow to hide his tears.

"Louis," said I, pressing his hand, "I will send my housekeeper to you to-day, and if you will let me I will take the two children to my house."

"No, no," he returned, hurriedly. "I should go mad without them; the loneliness would be terrible."

I felt much shaken in mind as I walked homewards; Ernestine's departure seemed so cruel, so unlike herself. "She cannot mean to forsake them," I said to myself, constantly. But when the whole day and the night went by, bringing no tidings, I was forced to confess that the iron of poverty had entered into her soul, and the thought of ease and comfort in her father's house had been too great a temptation for her weakness.

Madame Rodière sat up with Louis Dartôt that night, and in the morning she came forth from the cottage door to meet me. "He has raved all night," she said. "Through all the slow hours he has cried 'Ernestine!' till the sound rang through my heart. She is a cruel woman to desert her dying husband and her children like this."

"Hush!" I answered. "Do not let us judge her; we know nothing."

Louis was sleeping, but he awoke suddenly, with a smile on his face.

"Is the snow still on the ground?" he said. "I dreamed I was walking in green fields with Ernestine, and the sunshine was warm about us, and there was no sorrow, neither was there any more pain. Is the snow gone?"

"No," I answered, "it is as deep and hard as it was a month ago; it looks as if it would hide the green earth from us for ever."

"For ever!" echoed Louis. "No, I saw fields and flowers in my sleep." Then suddenly he caught my hand, and said, eagerly:

"Is she come back? No? Well, I am not so cruel, when in my senses, as to wish her back. Tell her so, if you see her again when I am dead. Tell her I never reproached her. She has always done well, shall I not trust her now?"

The cold hours of the short bright day went on, bringing no tidings to the desolate man of the wife who had left him alone to die. Towards night he raved again, and the sharp cry of "Ernestine! Ernestine!" rang out into the cold, dark air.

I sat by his bed that night, and sometimes, when the fever lulled suddenly, his restless cries ceased, and looking at me with a wistful air he would murmur:

"It is but delirium. I am well nursed by your kindness, mon ami.

I do not really need her. Do not tell her I called for her. She is better, happier at home."

And in another moment, back came the old cry, ringing her name through the night silence.

At length he slept, and rising softly I laid logs upon the fire and sat down by it, with wistful thoughts for company.

A hurried footstep without and a sharp tap upon the door roused me, and I opened it swiftly lest the sleeper should be disturbed.

Upon the snow stood a stalwart peasant, with a face so white with ghastly fear that I started back amazed at him. He dashed within the door as I opened it, and stood by me, trembling.

"The *wolves are out*," he said, in a whisper. Then I understood his fear, and looking across the snow, I saw four or five black forms creeping cowardly away. I closed the door safely, and led the man by the fire.

"The beasts followed me all across the hill," he said, "walking on either side, waiting for me to trip or fall. I had this stout stick with me, so they dared not spring. The cowards rarely attack a man. But it was warm work walking a league with those black devils on either side of me. However, here's the letter. It might have cost me my life to bring it, but a promise is a promise, and she seemed so terribly in earnest over it."

I seized impatiently the letter which his slow fingers had drawn from his vest, and placed it in Louis's hands. It was from Ernestine.

"My love," she wrote, "I dared not tell you I was going, because I feared you would not let me undertake so terrible a journey on foot. But I have not walked all the way, le bon Dieu has sent me many helps. I thought I would show my little baby to my mother and soften her heart. I thought I would throw myself at my father's feet, and tell him how ill you were, and that I—his only child—lived on the charity of strangers. Oh, Louis, I hoped to move him by my prayers and tears, but I have wept and implored in vain. He would only repeat the cruel offer he made in his letter—as if I would ever leave thee, dearest, till God parts us. So I am coming home again, darling, with my little one, and my mother has given me two hundred francs from her savings, and this little sum will greatly aid us. I trust to find thee better and more cheerful. Take heart, Louis, this money will help us through the winter, and when spring comes thou wilt work again. To return to thee quicker, I spend ten francs for a seat in the diligence, which will set me down only a league from home. Adieu till to-morrow, my love, when I shall kiss thee and the little ones again."

"I knew she was true and faithful," said Louis, laying down the letter with a happy smile.

I took it up and looked at the date. Why, it was this night—this very night she was coming back.

"We ought to have had the letter yesterday," I said to the countryman.

"Yes, but my cart and horse got into a bank of snow, and I had to get men to dig them out. The poor beast was nearly dead. I had to leave him at Bastoigne, and walk the rest of the way."

As he spoke a sudden thought chilled my blood. Ernestine was going to walk a league across the hills, and the *wolves were out!* Almost paralyzed by fear I drew the man aside, and bade him load Louis's gun and get the lantern lighted.

"The diligence sets her down at eleven o'clock," I said. "We have not a moment to lose. Wolves are such cowards that if they have ventured to draw near her, they will flee at the first signs of our coming."

"I am not going," returned the peasant, sturdily. "I have faced a pack of wolves once to-night: I don't do that a second time, *merci!*"

Nothing would move him, so I was compelled to tell Louis that I left him there as his companion.

"And I am going to meet Ernestine," I said. "She may want help."

"It is a cold walk for her," returned Louis, having no other fear in his heart. "Have you any wine with you?"

In his joy at his wife's return he seemed to have forgotten his weakness and his fever. I uttered not a word to alarm him, but hurried away with a frightful foreboding at my heart.

IV.

It took me a good half-hour to reach the village, where I roused the men, and, armed with all kinds of weapons, we departed for that point on the high road where the diligence stopped to put down passengers. All was blank here, and on the hard, frozen road it was vain to look for marks of wheels. The hour, however, convinced me the diligence had long gone by, and set down its frail freight to fight her way through cold and darkness over the bleak snow-covered steppes. The men were hopeful of her safety.

"She is used to the Ardennes,"-they said; "she knows the shapes of the hills, and will find her way by these. And as to wolves, we have not seen any on our road."

For two hours we shouted Ernestine's name aloud, we went from steppe to steppe, we descended the rugged sides of deep valleys, and searched among snow rifts, our fears growing on us, and hope sinking as we went. At length, as, with our sticks and guns aiding us, we toiled up the snowy side of a great hill, there fled by us like the wind a dusky form. Then another and another passed, then three together, and a voice shouted—

"Wolves! fire! fire."

One or two guns went off at random, but no shot took effect, and the brutes vanished like shadows.

At the top of this hill stood that solitary twisted tree of which I have spoken, and I know not what instinct impelled me to it, but I made straight for this with a feeling of horror indescribable. The men followed, whispering ominously.

"So they *are* out—and fiendish with famine. They don't fear women and children then."

Breathless, I struggled on. At the foot of the tree the moonlight showed us something lying strangely still. Another instant, and we were near enough to cry "It is a woman!"

I sprang forward, and knelt by her side on the hard snow.

Our arrival had driven the brutes from their prey, but not before cold and horror had put an end to the life of Ernestine Dartôt.

Doubtless she had come to the tree for shelter, and here for a long while she had stood at bay, the wolves still fearing to touch her. We knew this by the marks of their feet, showing where they had walked round and round the tree in a cruel circle, glaring on her with hungry eyes. We knew it by a more pitiful token still. Here, high up as she could reach, was her little infant wrapped in her shawl, and tied safely to a branch. Doubtless she had died defending it.

The child's sudden cry made many men there weep; and it was with very tender hands we unfastened it from its wild cradle, and then looked upon its little white face.

"She has died of cold and terror," said the soldier, Fifine's husband, as he raised her, softly. "You see, when she took off her shawl to wrap round the child, she had no protection against the bitter wind. And then the wolves, walking round and round her, must have made her heart die within her. Look you! They had not touched her."

It was the sole comfort he could give us.

We carried her home—the mournfullest procession that heart could dream of—and laid her down out of her husband's sight.

Then a woman, one whom his wife had loved, broke the truth gently to him. But how could such a truth fall gently on his bruised spirit? He lost the sense and meaning of her words before the tale was finished, and talking of his dream and the fields, where he would walk with Ernestine when the snow was gone, he died.

In the afternoon of the day following that sad night there came across the steppes at a rapid pace a light calèche, drawn by a strong horse, rough shod. I stood aside to let it pass, but the driver pulled up and asked the way to the cottage of Louis Dartôt.

"You can hardly drive thither," I answered.

Then a hard face thrust itself from beneath the hood and accosted me. "I will walk there if you will show me the way, sir."

Knowing who he was, I bowed to him, and led him towards the cottage silently.

"They are well, I suppose," he said, uneasily. "My daughter left me yesterday with—with her child, and—well, in fact, her mother has persuaded me that she looks ill, and wants better things than that sad scamp, her husband, can give her. Yesterday I offered to take her and the children, which was very liberal on my part. I had at first proposed taking only herself. She refused these offers of reconciliation. She would never leave her husband, she said. It seems the man is ill."

I was still silent.

"He is no worse, I trust," continued Monsieur Sarrasin, more and more uneasy at my looks. "The truth is, I am come to-day—madame desiring it so earnestly—to take them *all* back to Tréves. Will my daughter's husband be able to bear the journey, sir?"

"He will never go but one journey more, Monsieur, and that is to his grave. He is dead."

The miser held himself erect under this blow, but I saw his eyelids quiver.

"Poor Ernestine," he said, softly. "She loved him, she will feel this separation deeply, but she will recover it, sir—she will recover. Her mother and I will be tender to her."

"There is no separation between those two, Monsieur Sarrasin," said I. "They were 'lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they are not divided.'"

"What do you mean?" cried the wretched man, clutching me by the arm. "What are you saying?"

His face was ghastly white, and his lips trembling.

"I am saying your daughter is with her husband: come and see her."

The grief of the old is terrible; I will not dwell on it.

"She was brave always," he said, as he looked upon the courageous woman who had defended and saved her child.

When he went away with the children, I saw he held the little one close against his breast.

Poor old man! As in years to come he cherishes that grandson fondly, will he ever look upon his face without seeing also the fair, sad face of the daughter he forgave too late?

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

COMING HOME.

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1878.

POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AMIDST THE ROSES.

AT the foot of the miniature rocks, the waving trees overhead sheltering her from the noonday sun, the pleasant plash of the cascade murmuring in her ear, and the roses throwing out their perfume, sat Annaline Hetley, pencil in hand, sketch book on knee. An opposite opening afforded a vista of a beautiful bit of scenery, with the gleam of the sea in the distance. She had often wished to sketch it, and had come out now to do so, believing that she had chosen a moment when she would be free from intruders.

Not so. Almost at right angles with her, on the same line of rocks, for they curved sharply just there, sat the Lord of Pomeroy, who had come up most unexpectedly. Leaning forward, his chin resting on his hand, his eyes fixed on Annaline, he was talking earnestly. He wore a velvet coat and vest, his hat was off: ever and anon, he pushed back his dark hair thoughtfully, as if his mind were solving some knotty problem. To look at the man, and not admire his beauty was impossible. He had the exquisite features of the Pomeroys, the violet eyes of his mother; and, though slender, his form promised to be every whit as noble as was that of his grandfather, John Gaunt.

"I had no idea you were back," observed Annaline, whose fingers, as they held the pencil, were trembling ominously for the sketch.

"I returned last night. Don't you think I have been away long enough, Annaline? I do."

"It is not for me to think at all about it."

"No? Ten days, this blessed morning, since I left the abbey; since I left *you*. I have hungered for the sight."

"Yes," acquiesced Annaline, purposely misunderstanding him. "We all long to see our home again when we are away from it."

"It was not of the home I spoke, young lady."

"What a very lovely day!" she resumed, wondering what excuse she could make to go in and leave him. Not but that to be in his presence brought to her the sweetest rapture, for she had learnt to love him months ago. If only it had not been wrong.

"Do you remember those days at Vienna?" he suddenly asked.

She remembered them all too well. Rupert watched the bright colour go and come now with the retrospect.

"What's this I hear about your wishing to leave the abbey, Annaline?"

She scarcely knew how to answer him.

"Is it your wish? Or Mary's?"

"It was only an experiment, their trying me at all," she said in a low tone. "And—and Mrs. Pomeroy finds it does not answer. Mary does not care to have a companion."

"Is it true that you are going back to Berkeley Square?"

"No; they cannot have me," she answered simply. "Geraldine wrote and said so. It—I—oh, I am in the greatest strait," she continued, giving way to her agitation. "Indeed I would not intrude longer if I knew where to go. If I could hear of anyone going over to Florence—if I could——"

The most unqualified surprise was shining forth from Rupert's violet eyes. "But what is it?" he interrupted: "what do you mean? Cannot you be happy here until you do hear of somebody going to Florence? Where's the hurry?"

She made no answer: Rupert did not understand. The flush of emotion in her face was fading to paleness.

"Do you know, Annaline, that so far as I am concerned I should like you to stay here always?" he whispered, his voice taking a tender tone, his eyes gazing into hers. And surely, if true, ardent love ever sat in eyes, it sat now in his.

"But—please—you must not say such things to me—you ought not," she replied, hands and voice alike shaking. And she was beginning to put up her pencils and depart at all hazards, when Mary Pomeroy appeared on the scene: Mary with a flashing face of condemnation and haughty brow.

"Are you *here*, Rupert! I have been looking for you everywhere. Do you know how late it is? we shall have no walk."

"Did you care to walk this morning?" he rejoined. "It is too hot for it, Mary."

"Yes, because you have allowed the sun to get high. Well, we can sit here instead," conceded Mary. "It is pleasanter. Are you getting on with your sketch, Miss Hetley? Not very quickly, I see."

Annaline settled to her work again: it might look more pointed to go than to stay. She had not been out long, she said in answer to Mary. And there they sat, inhaling the scent of the roses which grew around.

Rupert talked and laughed; Mary, recovering her good humour, did the same: she was even gracious to Miss Hetley; and so the minutes flew by for all on golden wings.

"Do you know what I was thinking yesterday, Rupert?—that it would be a good plan to make the lake here larger, and have sailing boats upon it. The gardens would then be complete."

"Do you deem the gardens are not sufficiently complete?" he rejoined to Mary. "And, for sailing we have the sea. Now I will tell you what I do think would be an improvement—to fill up that miniature fishing-pond over yonder, which is of no earthly use, and construct a maze upon its site, after the model of the one at Hampton Court. That would be my idea of an improvement."

"And mine would be this," put in Annaline, who was feeling almost at ease in this sociable moment. "To make a handsome entrance to the gardens—which I think are grandly perfect as they are—in place of that poor little door we have to come in by. If the abbey were mine, I would have it done."

"If the abbey ever is yours, it shall be done," spoke Rupert in a meaning tone.

That was enough. The significant words, the marked tone, the earnest glance that he cast on Annaline, aroused the temper of Mary Pomeroy. She quitted her seat, speaking curtly.

"It is time we went in, I think. Be so good as to lay aside your drawing for to-day."

With the blushes called forth by Rupert's words not cold upon her cheeks, Annaline hastened to obey. They walked away together. Rupert sat on where he was.

"When do you leave us?" sharply asked Mary as they were passing through the yew-tree walk.

"As—as soon as I can," murmured Annaline. "I know I ought to have left before. It is very good of Mrs. Pomeroy to tolerate me so long."

"Mamma has not been able to help herself," candidly returned Mary. "Were I the Lady of Pomeroy, as I shall be sometime, I—But I will say no more. Only, I do think, Miss Hetley, that as soon as you can make it agreeable to leave it may be the better for us all."

"Yes—yes; of course. I know that. I never was placed in so uncomfortable a position before, and I feel it keenly. I hope you believe that, Miss Pomeroy."

Mary bowed her haughty head. Annaline's tears were gathering, and she hastened to her chamber to hide them.

As she had sat once before in that room; nay, more than once; so she now sat again, asking herself *what* was to be done. Some-

thing must be—and without delay. It did seem to this young girl to be a very cruel position that she was placed in. Turned: it may be said so: from her present shelter, the wide world was before her; and yet there was not a corner of that world to which she could fly under passing circumstances. She might not venture to make the journey to Florence alone: neither had she any money to take her to it. Nothing more had been heard from the Essingtons; and during Rupert's ten days' absence Annaline had remained on, at the abbey, uncertain what else to do, and unquestioned.

An idea had once or twice dawned upon her—that in her extremity she should appeal to the convent; asking it to afford her a home for the present, to be repaid by her services as a teacher. She had not altogether cared to do this; but it appeared to be the one resource left to her. Opening her little desk, she wrote a note to the Lady Abbess, formerly Sister Mildred, and sent it.

It chanced that Rupert, the following morning, received a letter from Frank Hetley. Annaline had let her mother know that she was not required longer at Pomeroy; but, not caring to pain her mother, who had enough cares, and seemed to have had nothing else all her life, she had made light of the affair; perhaps rather more so than she had thought for. It was that letter that had called forth this one from her father to the Lord of Pomeroy.

A gossiping letter, speaking of general matters, of Florence, and of the people Rupert knew there; a letter that Rupert had pleasure in reading. Towards the end, these words occurred. "Annaline tells her mother that her services are not required at Pomeroy, and she is in doubt where to go: so I conclude the Essingtons are off again from Berkeley Square. Will you pardon my presuming upon your kindness, to put up with her at the abbey a little longer—until we can make arrangements for her to return to us. Present my apologies to the Lady of Pomeroy for my thus venturing to trespass upon her hospitality—but I cannot let the child travel alone. We heard yesterday that Leolin Pomeroy had leave of absence, and was going (or had already gone) to England with his wife: they can bring Annaline back with them."

It was apparent that Frank Hetley confused the households at Pomeroy: or he would not have asked the favour of either Rupert or his mother, but of Mrs. Pomeroy. Letter in hand, Rupert went into the breakfast-room. The Lady of Pomeroy was already seated at the table, waiting for him. She was reading her own letters.

"You are late," she said, as he kissed her.

"Nay, my darling mother, I think it is you who are early," he fondly answered. Few sons loved a mother as Rupert loved his.

"The people are all coming," she observed, as she began to pour out the coffee.

"What people?"

"To dinner. It will be the first state dinner I have given,

Rupert, since you went away. I wish you were married," she added laughingly; "your wife would take all this trouble from me."

Rupert began his breakfast, forgetting the letter beside him. As yet he deemed the affair of very little consequence indeed: as a matter of course, Annaline *was* going to remain at the abbey.

"Who is your letter from?" she asked presently.

"It is from Florence—from Mr. Hetley. You can read it when you are at liberty. He seems to be under the impression that Annaline is about to leave the abbey in a hurry. I don't know what she can have written to him."

Sybilla looked down at her plate. "Mrs Pomeroy has been expecting her to leave," she observed.

"To leave some time, I suppose; but there cannot be any necessity for haste. *Is* there?" he added, struck with the look on his mother's face.

"Well, Rupert, I fancy they think the sooner she leaves, the better: that they want her gone."

A transient blaze of surprise, mixed with a touch of the Pomeroy anger, passed across Rupert's face. But he had his own sweet temper, and it vanished quickly.

"Why should they want her gone, mother?"

If the Lady of Pomeroy knew why, she did not say. Possibly some suspicion of the true motive had been penetrated by her clear discernment.

"Do you know why?"

"I believe neither Mrs. Pomeroy nor Mary likes her. Especially Mary."

"*Not like her!*" The suggestion appeared to Rupert to be so impossible a one that he simply stared at his mother. She smiled slightly.

"Yesterday evening when you were at Father Andrew's I paid a short visit to the north wing. Mrs. Pomeroy said a little on the subject; just a word or two. Enough, however, to show me that the continued stay here of Miss Hetley was not desired. She virtually received her dismissal a week or two back, Rupert, and they expect her to go."

"I never heard of so arbitrary a thing," flashed Rupert. "It is most unjustifiable. Do you mean that they want to *turn her out?*"

"Nay, I cannot say so much as that. Mrs. Pomeroy has told her she must leave; I fancy she is expected to do so."

"Then, mother, you will ask her to come to us."

The Lady of Pomeroy slightly shook her head. It implied a negative.

"Don't you *like* her?" questioned Rupert in a tone of pain.

"I like her very much indeed. Better than any young girl I ever met."

"Then why do you imply ——"

"Look here, Rupert," she interrupted, her voice dropping to a strange seriousness. "Nothing would give more pleasure to myself personally than to invite this young girl. But I do not see my way clear to do so. It would be opposing Mrs. Pomeroy's expressed wishes — that she should not remain at the abbey — in a very marked degree, and I cannot bring myself to venture on it. I have always, as you know, paid especial deference to Mrs. Pomeroy's wishes; I have always treated her with the utmost respect, because I would not have her see, or think, that *I* blamed her for the past. It has been rather a difficult course to steer, but I have managed it."

"I can understand all that. But—stay, will you first of all read Mr. Hetley's letter?"

Sybilla ran her eyes over it, and laid it down without comment. Rupert resumed.

"You see—it is an obligation laid on us, mother. If Mrs. Pomeroy turns Annaline out, we must take her in. It would have to be done were it even the case of a stranger; but the Hetleys are my friends —and you little know what a true friend he once proved himself to me. One may almost call them relatives, through Uncle Leolin's wife."

"If Mrs. Pomeroy should turn her out, we will see what can be done; but she would hardly go so far as that. How could she? She will no doubt yield to circumstances and keep her until an opportunity for her departure presents itself. You saw a great deal of the Hetleys in Florence, Rupert?"

"Oh yes."

"And you like them."

"Very much indeed. So would you, mother."

"And learnt to like this young girl?" she added in a whisper. "Have you any *especial* liking for her, Rupert?"

A moment's startled pause; a rush of red to his usually pale face; and then came a ring of light laughter.

"Oh, very especial indeed."

"My son, I was not jesting. Will you not give me a serious answer?"

"No, not to day, mother mine. But—were I to tell you that I *had*, would you object?"

"No."

A day or two went on. And then it became known that Miss Hetley had applied to the convent to admit her as teacher, that the convent had consented, and that she would quit the abbey on the morrow to enter there on her duties.

CHAPTER XXXV.

RUPERT AND MARY.

"I TELL you, Annaline, the thing cannot be allowed. How could you possibly have entertained so absurd an idea?"

The Lord of Pomeroy spoke with a slightly raised tone and a flash of his deep blue eyes. The news, just heard, had aroused him strangely: on the impulse of the moment he walked straight to the north wing to put his veto upon the contemplated step. There he found Annaline alone: Mrs. Pomeroy was at chapel; Mary seemed to be nowhere.

"What else could I do," pleaded Annaline—who had one of the most tractable of natures, and would willingly have pleased everybody in the world.

"You must remain at the abbey."

"No; I—I cannot do that," she said, her cheek slightly flushing in perplexity. "Mrs. Pomeroy expects me to leave. It has been very good of her to allow me to stay so long."

"Has it!" retorted Rupert, the slighting accent meant for Mrs. Pomeroy. "Annaline, we are responsible for you, and I tell you that this notion of yours cannot be thought of. You will remain here for the present."

"Indeed I cannot," she urged, almost with tears.

"Why cannot you?"

"I—the abbey does not want me. My staying here would disturb its peace."

"The abbey does want you, and you do not disturb its peace. What has come to you, Annaline?"

"I shall be very happy at the convent. And mamma has no objection to my teaching."

"Once for all, Annaline, it cannot be allowed. In this abbey you shall remain until an escort to Florence can be provided for you."

"But ——"

"My dear girl, this contention is child's play. Understand one thing: I am the lord of the abbey, and I will not allow you to go out of it. You have heard of the Pomeroy will," he added, his features relaxing to a smile, "it cannot be opposed with impunity. And," he continued, his voice taking a true and tender tone, "if you only knew how welcome you are to stay here, how doubly welcome to me, you would never think of leaving it."

"I ——" Annaline was beginning; though what she was about to rejoin, in her deep perplexity, she alone knew—when Mrs. Pomeroy glided into the room, devotion book in hand. This soft, gliding step and noiseless motion she had acquired of late years:

it seemed to be born of her intense sadness, her subdued spirit. Annaline escaped.

"Mrs. Pomeroy, I am come round to see you," began Rupert. "I heard, but five minutes ago, that Miss Hetley had been entertaining some extraordinary intention of quitting your roof for the convent—to become a teacher there."

"Yes," quietly replied Mrs. Pomeroy, untying her black silk bonnet strings.

"This cannot be allowed."

"By whom? I think it rather a nice thing for her."

"By me: though I must ask you to pardon me for saying so. Mr. Hetley ——"

"What is the dispute?" gaily demanded Mary, interrupting them at this juncture, her white morning dress and its blue ribbons contrasting curiously with her mother's sombre garments. "How stern you look, Rupert?"

"Mr. Hetley has written to me," continued Rupert, ungallantly taking no notice of Mary, beyond a nod, "placing his daughter under my charge and that of my mother. A moment yet, I beg of you, Mrs. Pomeroy, while I disclaim any apparent lack of courtesy to you on his part—he evidently thinks, either that you are the Lady of Pomeroy, or else that it is with my mother Annaline is staying. He has requested that she may continue to remain here until he can make arrangements for her return to Italy. Mr. Hetley is my very good friend, and I must see that this is done."

"In that case her stay might be prolonged to an indefinite period, and that, to me, would not be quite agreeable—I have not been accustomed to visitors of late, you know," objected Mrs. Pomeroy, while Mary stood against a marble side-table, a frown gathering on her fair brow. "The convent is a suitable and perfectly proper place for her, and I am glad the Lady Abbess has been good enough to admit her to it."

"It is not, under the circumstances. And that she should teach is neither proper nor suitable."

"Truly I consider that it is. Here is the young person without means, without a home ——"

"Madam, that is scarcely the right term to apply to her," flashed Rupert, the violet of his eyes becoming almost black in their anger. "A young lady of Miss Hetley's degree is not usually styled a 'person.'"

"Of her degree?"

"Her degree. She is of noble lineage. Her father ——"

"We need not go into this," interposed Mrs. Pomeroy, whose subdued voice and unmoved exterior presented rather a striking contrast to the feeling displayed by Rupert. "I am sorry you deem it necessary to interfere in this trifling matter, and am certainly at a loss to know what can render the convent unsuitable as a temporary

residence: it cannot be for long she will need to trouble it. Unless, indeed, her people should decide for her to remain there permanently to teach ——"

"Long or short, Francis Hetley's daughter cannot be allowed to enter it," interposed Rupert, "or to quit the abbey. My mother will no doubt receive her."

"Oh—if you make so great a point of it as that," resumed Mrs. Pomeroy, after a momentary pause, given to the revolving of matters as comprised in his concluding sentence: "if you really deem that her father would object, it is my duty to retain the young lady here. I did not suggest the convent: I should not have thought of it; the notion emanated from herself, and I was surprised when she informed me of what she had done. She shall remain with us."

"Thank you," said Rupert shortly. "Then I will now write to Mr. Hetley."

He was passing through the cloisters with a light step, when he heard a lighter step hastening after him: that of Mary Pomeroy. She put her arm within his in the free and careless manner that she used to do when a child, and they turned into the quadrangle. The sun was nearly at its meridian, but Mary, her straw hat on, heeded it not.

"What is the matter with you, Rupert?"

"The matter?" he answered in a pleasant tone. "Nothing."

"But there is. I never saw anyone so much changed."

"If you mean changed from what I was years ago, no doubt I am. It is only natural I should be. One cannot remain always a boy."

"And not changed for the better," freely went on Mary. "Never, when you were a boy, would you have attempted to call in question mamma's private arrangements, as you did this morning."

"I don't know that. If they jarred against the rules of courtesy—of hospitality—I should have rebelled then as I rebel now. Only, as a boy, I might have carried the trouble to my mother, and left it with her. I feel bound to interfere in this matter, reluctant though I am to do it: and I trust your mamma's good sense will see the thing in the proper light. Is it right, Mary, that Francis Hetley's daughter should be rudely thrust from our walls for a caprice? and when he has especially commended her to our care? You cannot think so."

"A caprice?"

"What else is it? You, as I am given to understand, felt yourself in want of some suitable young lady to reside here as your friend and companion. Aunt Joan sent for Miss Hetley. She came; appeared to be just what pleased you, and was warmly welcomed. But, ere she was well installed, a caprice takes you the other way: you don't want her, you are tired of her; and you contrive to let this be so apparent, that in her distress at intruding longer upon you, she absolutely offers herself to the convent as a teacher. I declare, Mary, my blood boils when I think of it."

"I don't see what business it is of yours."

"It is pre-eminently mine. I, as head of the abbey, feel responsible for what takes place within it. Most certainly no rude discourtesy shall be allowed within its walls, if I can prevent it."

"Annaline Hetley is nothing to you."

"She is this much to me—that her father is my much esteemed and valued friend. Be very sure that for his sake alone, if for no other, I shall protect his daughter."

Mary had released his arm, and seated herself on one of the iron benches, several of which stood round the large quadrangle. Rupert, standing by, took Mr. Hetley's letter from his pocket, and ran his eyes over its contents.

"Would you like to see what he says, Mary?"

"Not at all, thank you," making her rejection pointedly saucy. "The Hetleys and their concerns are nothing to me."

Rupert slightly knitted his brow, but smoothed it instantly. A smile lay in the depths of his eyes as he turned them full on his cousin.

"It is a pity you should turn crusty over this matter, Mary. To me it seems the simplest in the world—but yet, one of imperative obligation."

Mary Pomeroy flung back the blue strings of her hat, and then threw up her head. Something very like defiance might be read in her face.

"And so, you intend from henceforth to be absolute lord and master here?"

"I did not say so."

"Superintend all the internal arrangements, and look into the domestic affairs."

"Hardly as far as that," said Rupert, maintaining his gravity. "My wife—when I get one—might think I was trenching on her department."

"Very seemly, would it not be, for the future Lady of Pomeroy to make those things her care?"

"Still less seemly for the lord to make them his."

"Are we going to quarrel, Rupert?"

"I hope not. It certainly will not be my fault if we do."

"Why do you provoke me?"

"Indeed I do not wish to provoke you; I did not know that I did provoke you," he replied with tender earnestness. "I think, Mary—pardon me for saying it—you are this morning provoking yourself."

"We used to be the best of friends."

"And can be so still. Why not?"

"You—know—what—I—was to be!" she slowly resumed, the colour deepening on her cheeks, her large grey eyes strained up to his.

"What were you to be?" returned Rupert, not suspecting her drift.

"The Lady of Pomeroy."

A rush of red dyed Rupert's face. He did not answer.

"You have promised it often enough. Do you remember?"

"I remember we used to say so, Mary," he rejoined with an effort, his tone that of a man ill at ease; "but we were children then. You could only become lady here by—by ——"

"I know," put in Mary, as if to relieve his hesitation.

There ensued a pause; no doubt one of discomfort to both. Perhaps Mary was expecting him to speak; was *waiting* for it. If so, she found herself disappointed.

"*Don't* you care for me, Rupert?" she asked at length.

"Very, very much. I always shall care for you. We have been like brother and sister, you know, Mary. Let us continue to be so: it is my earnest wish."

"As brother and sister," she mechanically answered, displaying no emotion of any kind.

"And I am sure you have ruled here a great deal more than I," added Rupert, laughing.

"Yes: because I ruled you. I should like to rule here still, Rupert," she softly continued—"if it might be. I have been brought up to expect it."

"But don't you see that I am a Pomeroy; and we Pomeroys like to rule on our own score," returned Rupert, laughing still, evidently bent on showing that he wished to treat the conversation as a jest, rather than in earnest.

"I see—yes, I see," emphatically replied Mary, pain in her tone, and in her face. And she rose and disappeared within doors, perhaps not observing that the Lady of Pomeroy had come into the quadrangle and was close upon them.

"What is the matter?" asked Sybilla. "Why does Mary run away?"

All the lightness had gone out of Rupert's face. He had come to a sudden resolve—that of putting a question to his mother; one he had long wished to put. But he scarcely knew how to frame it.

"Mother, I—I somehow picked up an impression when I was a little lad—children invariably hear what is not meant for them, you know—that—that ——"

"Yes, Rupert," she said, surprised at his hesitation. "Go on."

"Well, it is better that I should speak," he resumed, as if to himself, "and set the matter at rest one way or the other. I gathered when I was a boy, as I tell you, mother, that when my Uncle Guy lay dying in the keep, the future—*my* future and Mary's—was alluded to between him and you. Did you make a promise that Mary should be the Lady of Pomeroy, and—of course—my wife?"

"Certainly not, Rupert," was the prompt answer. "Poor Guy naturally wished his daughter to become Lady of Pomeroy, *provided*

circumstances favoured it when she and you came to riper years: meaning if you were in love with each other, and wished it. I promised, should that prove to be the case, that I would not object to your union. That was the only promise, Rupert; and that, you perceive, was a conditional one."

The young Lord of Pomeroy drew a deep breath of relief. "Then I am not bound by anyone's promise to wed Mary? I am not bound in honour to remain single if I do not choose to wed her?"

"Assuredly not. How can you have imagined such a thing? Were you and Mary speaking of this?"

"Slightly—just an allusion. Mary would like to be Lady of Pomeroy."

"And you would not like it. Be at ease, Rupert: not a shade of obligation rests upon you."

"No," he said, in a low tone. "I like Mary as a sister, just as I used to like her; but my love is not hers."

Sybilla smiled. The arch look in her face told Rupert that she knew pretty surely where his love was given; and Rupert flushed to the very roots of his hair.

"She is the sweetest girl in the world, mother: she will be to you a loving and dutiful daughter," he whispered.

"So be it, Rupert. My blessing shall attend you both."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WITH MRS. WYLDE.

In her spacious and handsome bed-room at the White House, lay Mrs. Wylde, a dying. Not dying to-day, or expecting to die to-morrow; but slowly dying of an incurable complaint that might be long yet in its tardy progress. She knew her fate; had known it for some time now: knew that the fiat, which would transplant her from this world to a better, had gone forth, and could neither be checked nor resisted.

The once stout woman had become thin nearly as a skeleton; the comely face was pinched. Some days she exchanged her bed for the sofa. Theresa, her former faithful servant, had come back to nurse her. Mrs. Pomeroy, dutiful now, whatever she had been in her thoughtless girlhood, as anxiously affectionate as her cold and subdued nature allowed, would have spared more to her mother than the services of a favourite maid.

When attacked by sickness of this prolonged kind, knowing that death stands looming at the end of it, we have leisure to think of our past life; to perfect our repentance for its many mistakes and sins: poor Mrs. Wylde seemed to live in fruitless wishes that some of hers could be recalled.

"The one great mistake of my life, Alice, was that of forcing you on Guy Pomeroy," she observed to her daughter, on the afternoon of the day spoken of in the last chapter: for Mrs. Wylde was prone to enlarge on these past delinquencies, particularly after a visit from Father Andrew—and the good priest had just gone out. "It brought nothing but trouble in its train; trouble, and mortification, and misery."

"How often have I begged you to remember, mamma, that nothing can be more useless than to recall what is past and over," remonstrated Mrs. Pomeroy. "It makes me uncomfortable, and it must make you so."

"Child, it does me good to recall it; to express aloud my bitter remorse. Heaven knows how sincere it is; how differently I would act were my time to come over again."

"Mamma, I came here to-day to speak of the present, not of the past," said Mrs. Pomeroy. "I wanted to tell you that I fear Mary's chance of being Lady of Pomeroy is in peril. Rupert is taking the most extraordinary interest in that young person, Annaline Hetley."

"Let him take it," said Mrs. Wylde. "Leave all to God."

But the latter recommendation fell rather too tamely on Mrs. Pomeroy, considering her devotion. Ambition for her daughter was just as rife in her heart as it had been in Mrs. Wylde's heart in the days she was deploring, now long gone by. In fact it was precisely the mother's case over again.

"Annaline Hetley had made an agreement with the convent to take her," resumed Mrs. Pomeroy. "She was to teach—and a very proper arrangement it would have been. Rupert, however, has chosen to interfere to stop it—taking care to intimate to me that he is the Lord of Pomeroy, and that his will in the abbey is law. I did not like his tone when speaking of the girl; it betrayed an interest more than common. But that it might be considered an uncalled for procedure and excite comment, I would despatch her to Florence under a special escort."

Mrs. Wylde lifted her wasted hand in warning. "Don't, Alice; don't think of it. If there be anything between these two young people, it is not by separating them that you can frustrate it. They may be destined for one another by Heaven—and then neither seas nor land can keep them asunder."

Mrs. Pomeroy felt annoyed. "Can you know what you are saying, mamma? *Destined* for one another—they! It would ill befit the Lord of Pomeroy to wed a penniless girl, reared in obscurity; little less than a sin."

"Ah, my child, time was when I thought as you think—that Heaven must look upon our dreams of ambition as we look, and should be expected by us to forward them. But I have lived to see the fallacy of that; to shrink from its great mistake. Leave Rupert

Pomeroy and this young girl alone. Scheme not against them. For my part, I have never much thought that Rupert would make Mary his wife. At the very best, I have said to myself *perhaps* he will. But I have doubted. You know the Pomeroy boast, child—that the wife of the lord must be sans peur et sans reproche. Rupert might not deem that your daughter is so."

Mrs. Pomeroy said no more; she perfectly understood, and drew on her gloves to depart. Bending down to kiss the poor white face that lay on the not whiter pillow, she found herself detained by her mother's whisper.

"There is but one thing that will bring us peace when we come to lie as I am lying, Alice: a clear conscience. Oh, my dear, try and live so that it may be yours! Submit all things to Heaven in simple trust, and let it guide you."

Lying with her eyes closed, listening to the rumble of the carriage wheels as they rolled away in the distance, Mrs. Wylde crossed herself, folded her hands meekly on the counterpane, and began an inward prayer. Tears were slowly coursing down her wasted cheeks.

"Good afternoon, grandmamma!" interrupted Mary Pomeroy, who had come up to one entrance of the White House in time to see her mother drive away from another. "What are you crying about?"

"Not much, my dear: only my own thoughts. I cry sometimes when I dwell on the past."

Mary took off her hat and sat down by Mrs. Wylde. "I felt dull at home, so walked up to see you, grandmamma. I did not know mamma had been here."

"She did not stay long, dear. We got talking of a matter on which we do not think quite alike. It was about you."

"About me? About me and Rupert?" continued Mary with subtle instinct. "What about us?"

Not for a minute did Mrs. Wylde answer. But she saw no reason why she should not speak on this subject to Mary: indeed, she deemed it might be better to do so.

"Your mother says that the union projected between you and Rupert in your childhood is being imperilled—and it vexes her."

"Mamma says that, does she?" quietly replied Mary, "For all we know, grandmamma, Rupert has never meant to carry it out."

"True. I have always had my doubts."

"Always? Why?"

"Because," said Mrs. Wylde, slowly, as if desirous to weigh her words, "because, I thought Rupert might discover reason against it. A man judges differently from a boy, Mary. Rupert is charming; one in a thousand; good, and estimable, and honest hearted. Nevertheless he has grown up to all the pride that is inherent in the Pomeroys; nothing less could be expected; and he may wish to take a wife who knows no taint. I have just said so to your mother."

The girl drew up her head proudly. "What taint do *I* know, grandmamma?"

"In yourself, none. The taint came down to you from your parents."

Mary Pomeroy's hands lay perfectly still on her lap; the colour went and came in her fair young face. She was of an intensely reflective nature, strong to resolve and to do. That revelation made to her by Naomi Rex in her second childishness, had scarcely left Mary's mind since the hour it was spoken. By dint of questions pressed on old Jeffs, remarks to others, she had arrived at the assurance that an unpleasant secret—a stain on her father, or her mother, or both—did exist. And she resolved now to learn the whole.

"Grandmamma," she said quietly, placing her hand on Mrs. Wylde's arm as it lay outside the grey silk counterpane, "I do not know all the particulars of that trouble. Will you please tell them to me?"

"Do you know of it at all?"

"Yes. It lay between papa and mamma and Uncle Rupert. I know that much. It was a frightful calamity: and it led to papa's death and to Uncle Rupert's escape. That is what was thought at the time; but it was Uncle Rupert who died, and papa who escaped. I am a woman now, and I ought to be made acquainted with all. It is not right that what is known to the whole world should be kept from me."

"Perhaps not, child—but I can hardly judge. I wish Father Andrew was here."

"Don't you see, grandmamma, that this half knowledge is taking away my peace? I am ever dwelling upon it; ever picturing it to myself as—probably—being worse than it was. Better that I should hear the facts from you than from a stranger; and I must hear them some time. It is my due: and my knowing them cannot make the past either better or worse."

Without another word of dissent, won over completely by the reasoning, Mrs. Wylde entered upon the history of the past: she told it delicately, but without reservation. Mary sat still as a statue, and listened. She heard all. Her mother had loved Rupert, and flirted with Guy, the heir. Guy became lord, and won her with a lie—an old prediction foretold it all. He represented Rupert as scandalously unworthy. Unworthy he might have been, on the whole, but he was not in that one matter: the lie was Guy's. Mrs. Wylde did not spare herself in the recital: *she* had urged on the marriage as eagerly as Guy; Alice, too, dazzled with the lord's rank and position, with the Pomeroy show and state, was less averse to it than she might have been. They were married, and were happy, and she, Mary, was born. Rupert re-appeared upon the scene then, and Guy's treachery came out, and it turned his wife's heart against

him. She fell into the habit of secretly meeting Rupert: in the walks, in the keep—anywhere. They met for the last time in the haunted room of the west tower, and Guy found them there—and, in his passion, or perhaps partly in the scuffle between the brothers, he killed Rupert.

"But—surely—my mother was incapable of real wrong-doing!" breathed Mary from between her bloodless lips. "She could not have been guilty of it?"

"No, no, child, she was not. But, don't you perceive how it was? You know what the Pomeroys are. In their haughty pride—especially as regards their wives, for the Pomeroy women have ever been honourable—they looked upon her conduct, in permitting herself those meetings, as being just as bad as guilt. At first the truth was not known, for she—in her own pride, I suppose—would deny nothing and confess nothing; and people judged her just as they pleased. The worst feature in it all was her treachery to Guy, in becoming a partisan of his brother against him. It was done in the indulgence of her temper: nothing more. I cannot excuse her, Mary. Though she was my daughter, I never did that: as she knows."

"Yes, I perceive," murmured Mary. "Papa was treacherous first; he won her by treachery; and mamma was treacherous later, out of anger. And it ended in a dreadful tragedy that has entailed a lasting scandal on the Pomeroys, and a stain upon me. Grandmamma, I understand it all now."

Mrs. Wylde lay with her eyes shut, holding Mary's hand. The girl had leisure to *think* in the silence. So long did it last that one might have supposed Mrs. Wylde to be asleep. Not so, however. She suddenly carried the young hand to her lips and kissed it.

"And this is why Rupert does not deem me fit to be his wife!" exclaimed Mary then, starting out of her reverie. "Well, it is sufficient cause: I, a Pomeroy, say it."

"I do not know whether Rupert does, or does not; the doubt has often crossed me, that's all. But oh, child, believe me!" added the invalid, earnestly, "I have been taught by experience that those women are the happiest who keep themselves aloof from marriage."

"As the nuns do," dreamily remarked Mary.

"Ay, as the nuns do. But I was not thinking of nuns: rather of women who are in the world, but not of it, who are not ensnared by its deceits. Such a woman, for instance, as your aunt Joan. Joan had her offers; I can tell you that, Mary; but she chose the safer path."

Mary made no comment. Her deep, thoughtful eyes were fixed on the blue sky through the open window, as if she thought to read a solution to some doubt there.

"But these self-denying women have their reward. Look at your aunt Joan. See how tranquil are her days! It is only other people's

sorrows that trouble her; she lives to do what good she can for all, in her unobtrusive way. Joan's fate is to be envied, Mary, in comparison with that of many married women. None, save themselves, know how great their trials often are; or how solemn their responsibilities."

"But I am not like Aunt Joan," dissented Mary, in her straightforwardness. "If I am in the world, as you have just remarked, I must be of it. Do you understand, grandmamma?"

"Quite well, Mary."

"I could not live the self-denying life that Aunt Joan lives. Give me the world, and all desirable things in it: wealth, power, gaiety, pleasant social ties, and—yes—marriage; for why should I be left when other girls are chosen; or else put me entirely out of it, and give me the secluded life of the nun, with its uneventful tranquillity. It must be the one or the other for *me*, grandmamma."

"Very likely, child," carelessly replied Mrs. Wylde, whose strength was completely wearied out; and she lay back and closed her eyes. Mary felt glad of the silence: her mind was busy. Theresa brought in tea, and disturbed both.

The sun was drawing towards the west when Mary walked home, deep in thought, and sat down in her chamber. It was not yet quite time to dress. Her eyes fell upon a group of people in the garden below: her mother, the Lady of Pomeroy, and—yes—Joan. Joan must have returned this afternoon, then. At a little distance stood Annaline and Rupert. Rupert's head was bent as if his tones were whispered ones; her cheeks mantled with blushes as she listened, her eyes were cast down.

"I see it all," murmured Mary to herself, her heart aching with its pain; "in this one day I have lived years. *He* will choose *her*, and make her the Lady of Pomeroy; and what is left for me? But oh, he should have chosen better! Putting myself out of the question, he should have chosen better. Who are those Hetleys—*her* branch of them?—obscure, needy, next door to adventurers."

They were strolling towards the lake now. Mary's jealous eyes followed them, and took in all the features of the scene. The water shone in the slanting rays of the sun; the white swans were disporting about the green island that rose in the lake's midst. Rupert seemed to be speaking to her of that picturesque wooded island, his finger pointing to it.

"Does he love her?" Mary went on, after a pause. "Or is he merely choosing her because he must needs marry as his forefathers have done? Would he have chosen me but for—that which I have heard to day? Ay, I think so. He has learnt all about the great trouble, and deems me unworthy to be his wife. What is left to me?"

Never, perhaps, during her whole life had an expression of pain crossed Mary Pomeroy's face like unto that which sat on it now. Her eyes were closed, her hands pressed her temples.

"Yes," she said presently, as if deciding some mental debate, "I will go back to the convent and take the veil. Nothing else remains for me. And I shall be tranquilly happy there—more so, perhaps, than I should be in the bustling world. How happy I was when I lived there—how loth to quit it. There will be opposition made to it here, no doubt; but I shall carry out my own will."

Annaline was bending over the brink of the lake, as if she would see her face in its pellucid waters. Rupert put his hand on her shoulder, and she drew back again.

"Do I blame Rupert?" resumed Mary. "No. He but acts in accordance with the instincts of our race. Were I the Lord of Pomeroy, and any stain lay upon the girl I loved, I would not make her my wife though I died of it. But neither must he wed that unsuitable girl he is talking with."

Back, they were coming now: the ladies had apparently called to them: Rupert bending towards her, her conscious face half turned from his.

"Yes, all is clear to me," concluded Mary Pomeroy in the tone of one whose resolution is taken. "It is neither Rupert's fault nor mine. Children must suffer for the sin of their parents: that is one of God's primary laws: I must suffer for that of mine. I will devote myself to God, and strive to follow Him in all ways, to live only for Him—and, perhaps, that may atone in some measure for them."

The Lord of Pomeroy gave a state dinner that evening; his first; and the loiterers by the lake had been called to with an intimation that it was time to dress. Annaline dutifully followed in the wake of her elders, Rupert with her: but, no sooner were the three ladies beyond the door of the garden than Rupert suddenly put her arm within his own and marched her into the lime-tree avenue. She timidly resisted, saying she must not stop. All the same to Rupert.

"I have wanted to talk to you since the morning, Annaline, and have found no opportunity. You know, I presume, that that convent scheme of yours is at an end; that you remain for the present Mrs. Pomeroy's guest?"

"Yes, Mrs. Pomeroy told me," was the reply. "But oh, I wish you had allowed me to go. I am an intruder here; I do not like to remain."

Rupert smiled—as a man entirely at ease. The blue of the evening sky, flecked with patches of gold, shone down through the sweet lime branches, their leaves of a more tender green than they would take later in the year; a nightingale sang in yonder bough.

"Do you remember, Annaline, one evening that you and I were together in the gardens at Florence and contrived to lose ourselves to the rest of our party?" he asked. "We were talking, amidst other subjects, of the song of the nightingale: you had never heard it, and I told you it was often heard at Pomeroy."

"I remember it," she answered in a low tone.

"Do you like the song—now that you hear it."

"I could listen to it always."

"And yet you want to run away from it."

"Not from that. Not from the fine old abbey, and these lovely gardens, and the grand sea that is ever-changing and ever-beautiful," she added impulsively. "I wish to run away because I am not wanted; I am at best an interloper."

"I told you recently that I was lord and master here; that my will was law," continued Rupert. "What if I say that you must not run away at all?—must remain here for life?"

Annaline trembled and would have turned. "No," she answered, "you must not say that. Pray, pray do not!"

"But I do say it," repeated Rupert, his voice changing to the deepest tenderness. "You know, you must know, how I have loved you, Annaline. I believe that we have loved each other."

She burst into tears, greatly agitated. "Rupert, it will never do; pray do not think of it. What would the Lady of Pomeroy say?"

"The Lady of Pomeroy says she wants to give up her rule here to another, and to be my mother only. She says that she would rather welcome Annaline Hetley to her heart than any girl in the wide world."

A startled light of joyful surprise shone in her glorious brown eyes, lifted for a moment to Rupert's; a brighter blush dyed her cheeks.

"Did she really say that?" she whispered. "But"—the blush and the light alike fading—"you forget Mary. She says she is to be the Lady of Pomeroy."

"Mary is fond of joking," said Rupert lightly. "Mary does not care for me; nor do I for her. We are only cousins."

"Does she *not* care for you?"

"Not in that way. Believe that, Annaline."

"Will you please let me go in? I have to dress."

"I cannot help that. You have not given me an answer. My darling, I wait for it. Will you be my wife?"

She turned her face upon the arm that sheltered her, and gently wept her emotion. The Lord of Pomeroy needed no assurance in words: he saw, perhaps he had long seen, how she loved him.

"Will you grant me one little boon, Rupert?" she prayed in the midst of his caresses and her happy tears. "Do not let it be known whilst I remain here. It might annoy Mrs. Pomeroy. I fear she does not like me."

"I would rather it were not known just now, except to my mother and yours," avowed Rupert, thinking of Mary and her wasted hopes. "So be it, Annaline."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

RIVALRY.

In the banquet-hall sat a goodly company. Some such a company as you saw in it many years before, reader; only that that was more numerous than this. Guy, Lord of Pomeroy, sat at the table then with his vain and pretty wife; both of them unconscious of the tragedy that was so soon to fall. Another lord headed the table now; his mother, Sybilla, facing him. The illuminated windows were beautiful as of yore; the wax-lights gleamed on the silver, on the rare and costly flowers which decked the table, on the dresses of the ladies with their sparkling jewels. To the right of the Lord of Pomeroy sat a proud and stately marchioness; to the left sat the dowager mother of the Earl Sones, who had been so great a scapegrace in his young days, when he was Viscount Winchester. Very near to him, but one removed from Lady Sones, was Annaline Hetley; he had so contrived it; her sweet face all too lovely in its consciousness of what the afternoon had brought forth; her white muslin dress pure and simple as she was; much too simple for this occasion of magnificence. Mary Pomeroy, little less beautiful than her successful rival, but with a thoughtful sadness in her deep grey eyes, was attired in costly white silk and lace. Joan wore a satin of her favourite colour, purple; Mrs. Pomeroy's sombre black was relieved this evening with white lace; and the Lady, at whose side sat Father Andrew, rubicund and jolly, wore a robe of ruby velvet.

There is nothing to tell of the dinner, except that it came in due course to an end. The Lord of Pomeroy bowed the ladies from the door as they swept away.

"I did not think it would be like this," whispered Annaline to him later in the evening, when he found her in a remote room.

"Like what?"

"All this grandeur. I never saw such beautiful dresses in my life. Will it be often like this at Pomeroy?"

"Not often. Generally we can be at our ease. I can wear a loose coat and you last year's morning-gown."

"You are laughing, Rupert. I fear you feel ashamed of my gown now—this gown."

"Very much indeed," gravely assented Rupert.

"I do. It has made me feel uncomfortable; out of place amidst the others. Did you notice how costly their lace is, how their jewels sparkle and gleam?"

"You feel uncomfortable in this, do you?" laughed Rupert.

"Not for myself," she added, raising her ingenuous eyes to his. "I have not been used to wear anything better. Only ——"

"Only what?"

She did not continue. She could not say that it was in his eyes she wished to look well; not so very different from other people. As she stood in silence, her face held down, her fingers opening and shutting her fan (a white paper article which Lady Essington presented her with, and had given one shilling and sixpence for) and Rupert was gazing at her with a strange tenderness, Mary came up. Annaline looked up with a start.

"Did you want me?" she hurriedly asked.

"*I* do not want you;" and for the life of her Mary could not keep contempt out of her tone, for her heart was very sore. "My Aunt Joan has been looking for you."

Away went Annaline. Mary, playing with her own costly fan, turned to Rupert.

"Tell me, Rupert. Are you going to make *her* the Lady of Pomeroy?"

Rupert hesitated. It was an awkward question.

"Do not think I wish to annoy you; to recall what might have been," she hastily resumed, her eyes flashing. "I speak to you only as a friend, a sister—and the open truth is always best."

"Mary, you know how greatly I esteem you," he answered, meeting her words frankly. "I love you as tenderly, as truly, as ever brother loved sister. But—you must be aware that, even had other circumstances been favourable, we should not suit one another."

"Be honest," flashed Mary. "Tell out the truth. It is not for *that* you reject me: but for that—that trouble connected with my father and mother: and which has left its stigma upon me."

"No!—on my sacred word of honour, no!" he replied, gathering some of her own excitement. "Believe me, that never did, or could or should weigh with me."

"Then," she slowly said, all the pride of her race rising to her countenance, "it is the girl herself who has cast her coils around you. Think not I condescend to reproach you on any score but your own, Rupert—and, for myself, my lot in life is chosen. It is for you I am pained."

"For me? I do not understand you, Mary."

"That you should for a moment think to throw yourself away upon this girl. A mésalliance—"

"That will do, Mary. The lineage of the Hetleys is as good as ours; her own training and education have been equal to your own: are you wilfully blind, that you do not see it? Let the topic cease."

"Not yet. It is you who are blind. A girl who has had to go out as companion—who is seeking to go as teacher. A fit wife, she, for the Lord of Pomeroy!"

"Shall I take you back again, Mary?"—offering his arm. But she drew a step away, facing him as before, and talking rapidly.

"Do you call to mind what her father is—and has been? A man ever in debt—who could hardly have existed at all but for the generosity of Lord Essington; who was saved from coming quite to grief by my Uncle Leolin's getting him that inferior post at Florence. As mamma has remarked, Francis Hetley is next door to an adventurer."

"Francis Hetley is a good and honourable man; one of nature's noblemen: let me tell you that, Mary. Poor? Yes, he is that. It is his only failing."

"All the same, a daughter of his can never be a fit wife for you. Go out into the world, and choose a better."

Condescending to accept his arm with the last retort, she walked with him through the rooms. A goodly pair—and many an admiring eye thought so; proud in their lineage and in their beauty.

Half hidden by the curtain of an open window stood Annaline. Rupert did not see her, Mary did; and cast a look of haughty condemnation, of contempt upon her as she swept past. She was quite *honest* in this contempt. Putting herself entirely out of the question, she, looking on with the distorted eyes of pride and prejudice, deemed Annaline Hetley an entirely unsuitable wife for the Lord of Pomeroy. Reared in wealth, in haughty self-consciousness of the state and station of the Pomeroys, Mary could but despise the shifts and slights that poor Francis Hetley had all his life encountered, and regard him and his children as of an order entirely different from her own and Rupert's. That such a marriage would be a fatal misfortune for Rupert; nay, for the Pomeroy family, and that he ought, if possible, to be saved from it, she heartily believed. Annaline caught the look of scorn given to her. She shivered with pain; her heart turned sick. The Lord of Pomeroy, instinct too surely whispered her, would never be allowed to fulfil his engagement with one so despised by his family as she.

"Will you dance a quadrille with me, Annaline?"

She started from her reverie to see his face bending over her, to hear his low-breathed tones, so full of music. A quadrille had been proposed by the young people, not many of whom were present. Rupert, as lord and host, had been doing duty upon stilts all the evening to satisfy the exactions of ceremony; he considered he might be allowed to satisfy himself on the score of choosing a partner.

"I cannot dance tonight," said Annaline, shivering slightly.

"Not with *me?*" he softly whispered, irresistible persuasion in his face and tone. And Annaline yielded

That one quadrille over, the guests departed, one set after another. The Dowager Countess Sones remained last: her servants were tardy. But the carriage was soon announced, and Rupert took her down to it.

"The most delightful party the abbey has known since the old, old days," she said to him as he placed her in it. "Thank you for your civility to an old woman. You will make a true chief of Pomeroy."

Rupert laughed, shook hands, and the carriage drove out of the gateway.

At the same moment he heard the sound of a carriage approaching it. Somewhat surprised, he stepped outside.

Yes, it was so. Nay, unless his good sight or the moonlight deceived him, *two* carriages were in view. Rupert mentally wondered whom the advancing guests could be.

"Have they mistaken the hour of invitation and are coming to dinner at midnight?" he lightly remarked to Father Andrew: who was by his side, about to say good night.

Up rolled the vehicles; two post carriages from the Crown Hotel at Owlstone, full of people inside and luggage out; and stopped. Leolin Pomeroy, Lady Anna, their three children, and some attendants.

"Can you take us in, Rupert?" asked Leolin, as he got out.

"I should think so; heartily glad to do it," warmly responded Rupert as he shook his uncle's hand. "But, have you dropped from the moon, yonder?"

"We have dropped to-day from London," said Leolin in a low, not to say covert tone. "I'll tell you about it presently."

Rupert gave his arm to Lady Anna; she looked fatigued, subdued. The two little girls and their brother seemed more quiet than children generally are.

"Is anything amiss?" involuntarily asked Rupert. But just then his mother came forward to welcome her unexpected guests, and the question fell unheeded.

Leolin soon explained, Lady Anna having gone to prepare for a hastily arranged meal. Upon arriving that morning in the metropolis, for they had crossed by the night mail from Calais, they drove to Berkeley Square, where they were expected on a visit. There they found ill-tidings, and the house in a sad commotion. Lord Essington had died the previous evening of the epidemic then raging; his mother and sister had flown away from it in distress and alarm.

"The news half stunned us," continued Leolin, who stood the centre of the curious and commiserating group: Mrs. Pomeroy, Joan, Mary, Annaline, Rupert and his mother. "What to do in the emergency, I hardly knew. The house in which poor Essington lay dead might not be safe for my wife and children: neither might London itself be. One is apt carelesssly to ignore these epidemics; but when they are brought home to our own door, we realise their danger. I told Anna we had better come straight on here; you would excuse our taking you by storm under the circumstances; and we drove off to the hotel at the station for breakfast. But we missed the proper train, and had to travel by a later one. Anna said we ought to remain at Owlstone for the night, as it was so late ——"

"Oh, no," broke in Rupert. "It was better for her to come here, Uncle Leolin."

"So I thought, Rupert. She is terribly cut up about her brother·

It is not only his death, you see, but its suddenness. Poor Essington! It must be a sad blow to his mother."

"Lady Essington was not ill—was she," asked Annaline, whose eyes were wet. She had not liked the earl as a probable husband; but she did like himself fairly well, and his death was in truth a shock.

"No, she was not ill, only frightened; Geraldine terribly so," said Leolin, turning to answer. Then for the first time he recognised Annaline: there had been so much confusion.

"Is it you, child!" he cried, bending to kiss her. "Great scandals we have been hearing of you, little runaway—proposing to convert yourself into a governess! Your father did not quite like the idea of it; I can tell you that. Wanted some pocket money, I suppose. Well you won't need to teach for it now."

"Not need to—?" stammered the girl, with a hot blush, believing that Rupert's proposal must have become known in some unaccountable manner.

"Surely not," returned Leolin, looking at her. "It would have been slightly incongruous, I take it, for Miss Hetley to be teaching; yet be more so for the Lady Annaline."

A pause of suspense. Annaline's lips parted. Joan was the first to recover her memory.

"Why yes, to be sure," she said. "Your father comes in, Annaline, as Lord Essington leaves no son."

"Of course he does," added Leolin. "Frank Hetley is now Earl of Essington. He was telegraphed for at once."

Annaline, in her modest gentleness, drew out of notice. Rupert glanced at Mary from between his half-closed eyelids. It was as much as to say—How needless were your taunts: what of her position now?

So Mary understood it. Crossing over to him, she drew him aside, speaking in a low tone.

"Heaven is with you—and *her*," she said. "There is no mistaking it."

"I trust so," answered Rupert. "But," taking her hand in his, "my mind cannot be at peace so long as you are at war with me. Oh Mary, let us be the cordial friends we used to be! There is no good reason why we should not. Our feeling for one another remains just the same and may remain the same for ever: that of true, affectionate friendship. There *never was love on either side.* Your own heart must tell you that."

"I never said there was—or thought it. Had there been love on mine, I could not have abused you so freely," shrewdly added Mary. "In that case I might rather have—how does it run in Shakespeare?—pined away; have let 'concealment feed upon my damask cheek.' The cheek is less damask than hers, Rupert."

Her tone had changed to a light one, with a touch of humour in it; and Rupert felt thankful. Though perfectly well aware that Mary

was not in love with him, that she never had been, for he knew the signs of love too well to fear that, the resentful mood she had been indulging had brought him the greatest discomfort, also some self-reproach. Reproach that he could not love her, and did love another.

"I was brought up to think myself the future Lady of Pomeroy: and I should have liked to rule as such," she freely avowed, the rays of the wax-lights, underneath which they stood, falling softly on her up turned face. "But we might not have got along together, Rupert: so perhaps all things happen for the best. I should have wanted my own way too much."

"And I should have wanted my own," laughed Rupert, his countenance bright with the change this long-standing perplexity had taken.

"Yes, you will exercise power, just as your ancestors exercised it, unless I am mistaken. And that's why you have chosen that milksop of a girl," added Mary, who never could help speaking out exactly what she thought. "You think she'll not have a word to say for herself in any matter on which her opinion may not chance to agree with yours. And I quite believe she will not."

She was turning away to greet Lady Anna, who had entered, and was sitting down to partake of the refreshment she had chosen—tea. But Rupert held her hand.

"Then it is with us as it used to be, Mary? The same implicit confidence between us; the same honest brotherly and sisterly affection; the same pleasant intercourse? My dear, let it be so!"

"Yes," said Mary—"for a short time. You and I will be the happy friends of yore, and I shall find fault with you and rule you to my heart's content."

"Why for a 'short' time?"

"Ah, I cannot tell you that now, Rupert. Leave it to the future."

"Three goodly children!" observed Father Andrew who had been making friends with the young people—as he was sure to do with all children, and now stood behind the tea-table talking with Leolin and his wife. "And you have given them the old family names—Leolin, Mary, and Anna. Nice names, all; pretty in sound, easy to speak. What names can vie in their beautiful simplicity with Mary and Anna?"

"Ay," said Leolin, "we leave grandiloquent names to our waiting maids now."

"Three goodly faces!" repeated the priest, looking at the healthy-hued children. "Vienna seems to be more favourable to your offspring than Pomeroy was, Lady Anna."

Lady Anna lifted her eyes to his: a great thankfulness in their depths replacing for the moment the recent sadness which her brother's death had brought.

"All things are more favourable to my children now, father, than they were in the days at Pomeroy; I praise Heaven for it every hour of my life."

The priest knew perfectly well what she was recalling—the old

trouble which Leolin had worked, touching the succession : or, rather, which he had attempted to work. But that mistake was over and done with long ago : and the later years of Leolin Pomeroy's gentle wife had been unclouded sunshine.

"Shall I murmur at my lot?" asked Mary Pomeroy of herself as she laid her head upon her pillow that night, and thought of the turn affairs had taken. "Surely not. I believe what grandmamma says—that our destinies here are marked out for us. All the events of life, great and small, even those we regard as the most trivial, are ordered by God. It is not decreed that I should be Rupert's wife—and if I rebel at the decree, it is not for himself, but for the place and power that would have been mine. We have been but brother and sister; no other feeling has ever swayed either of us; therefore, to marry would have been wrong. Esteem, friendship, plenty of that there is between us, but no love. No; it simply *could not be.*

"She will make him a better wife than I should have made," went on the soliloquy, after a pause. "In as much as that she is meek and yielding, and will not have a wish of her own apart from his. I should have followed my own will and taken my own way, for I am a true Pomeroy, just as Rupert is, and there might have been a continuous struggle for the mastery. Or, if Rupert in his chivalry had yielded to me—and chivalry is inherent in his nature—he would not have been happy. No, it would never have done for two Pomeroys to come together, and Heaven has been wiser than we were—that Heaven which I shall hereafter alone serve, and which will most assuredly return to me the blessing of peace."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

COMING HOME.

Had Abbeyland ever been so gay before? Had so many flowers ever been there displayed? Had the grand old abbey ever put on signs of life and gladness like unto these? Not in our recollection. The once gloomy windows were thrown open to the sunshine; troups of servitors waited in the gateway; the men in their gorgeous state liveries of purple and silver, the women with new gowns, white bows in their caps, and flowers in their hands. Old Jerome, his white locks scanty with age, had hobbled round from the keep to head them: Bridget, chattering to him as usual, had put off her black, which she was wearing for old Naomi Rex, who had died a month before, and looked resplendent in a charming suit of green and violet. All Abbeyland was astir in its best. For Rupert, Lord of Pomeroy, was bringing home his bride.

What a contrast it was, if only in the matter of weather, with

that day, not far short of a quarter of a century before, when Guy, Lord of Pomeroy, had brought home his ! You cannot have forgotten it; or how the jarring elements seemed to make war with one another and with the earth, as if they would thunder forth denunciations on the marriage. To-day, all was sunshine and peace. The calm blue sky was without a cloud; the beautiful blue sea looked as though it never would be treacherous. Certainly if the terrific storms of that day were taken as an augury of evil for the bridegroom and bride, the fair brightness of this might be held to be the harbinger of good.

But this was not the day of the marriage. The ceremony had taken place in London some ten days ago. The world was growing older, if not wiser, and Rupert did not deem it absolutely necessary to keep up all the Pomeroy customs to the letter, or to make an inconvenient rush to the abbey the moment the nuptial knot was tied.

Annaline was married from the old house in Berkeley Square—her father's now. It was a quiet wedding; made chiefly so on account of the recent death of Lord Essington. The present earl, modest, kind-hearted, and as little self-asserting as he had ever been when Frank Hetley, had absolutely offered to give up the use of that house to the late earl's mother; neither he nor his equally unselfish wife liking to take it from her. But old Lady Essington returned for answer a haughty refusal, very bare of thanks. She and Geraldine were amazed, mortified, resentful at the unexpected turn affairs had taken, and despised Frank Hetley as they had never despised him yet. As if poor Frank could have helped his cousin's death, or could help being next in the succession ! Leolin Pomeroy remarked that Lady Essington's refusal to retain the house, had been made "in temper"; she and Geraldine must have repented of it ever since; and he only hoped they would not be in a hurry to swoop down on Berkeley Square with professions of friendship and worry the new earl and countess out of their tranquillity.

Guests had gone up with Rupert to be present at the marriage ceremony: the Lady of Pomeroy—lady for the last day in her life; Joan, Leolin, and Father Andrew. Father Andrew had never been in London but once, in his early life; he enjoyed the sight all the more now, and would be sure to talk of its wonders as long as he could talk of anything. "I married the lord's father and mother," proudly observed the priest at the wedding breakfast; "'twould have seemed hard had he not asked me to help marry himself." Major Barkley had come many miles to be present.

Rupert carried away his bride, and the others returned to Pomeroy. Ten days had gone by, and now the bride and bridegroom were expected home.

And, during this slight interval, certain changes had taken place in the interior economy of the abbey. Mrs. Pomeroy had left it for ever; and Sybilla had returned to her former abode in the south wing. Poor Mrs. Wylde, drawing very near her end now, had made

one final appeal to her daughter to go home to her that she might be with her at the last. Rather, perhaps, to her surprise, all former appeals having been so peremptorily rejected, Mrs. Pomeroy acquiesced without a dissenting word.

"I was going to propose it to you, mamma," she said. "I shall be glad to quit the hateful abbey, in which I have never had aught but trouble and sorrow, and make your house my home for the future."

"Child, this is glad news," spoke Mrs. Wylde, a gleam of pleasure lighting up her worn face. "And what of Mary?"

"I know not—and care not,"—and Mrs. Pomeroy's voice and face became as hard as a very subdued woman's can become. "But for Mary's sake I should have quitted the abbey long ago; it was in her interest alone I stayed. I might have spared my pains."

"You speak as if you were grieved, Alice?"

"Grieved! Grieved is not the right word for it, mother. I have not been very grateful to you in many ways and at many times; but I never showed to you the ingratitude that my child is showing me. She wants to take the veil."

"Ay, she has told me," said the dying grandmother.

"Told *you!*"

"Yes; and I have talked to her. Her duty at present is with you, Alice; but to the convent she seems determined to go; her happiness lies in it, she says. Possibly a medium course may be found. And later, when you shall have reconciled yourself to the idea, or, perhaps, when you shall be no longer here to need her, she may fully retire to it and dedicate herself wholly to God. Leave all things in His hands, child."

But this has been a digression—and yonder come the bride and bridegroom.

Who so elated as old Jeffs, the state coachman to so many of the Pomeroy lords, one after the other? Jeffs in full feather, and a new cocked-hat, and a big nosegay in his button-hole, is driving them home from the station. He sits on the box proudly, his handsome carriage and the footmen behind him, his four greys well in hand: though old, he is a good whip yet. As he had once before essayed to drive (and failed) Guy home and his young wife. Jeffs shakes his head at that mishap yet; never liking to be reminded of it. No such failure to-day. The fine horses are in the best of tempers; the skies are bright and the roads are smooth. Jupiter, seated on Olympus, his court doing homage around him, never felt more self-consequent than does Jeffs feel, perched on his box-seat to-day.

"Do you see them, my darling?" asks Rupert, bending his head to the blushing face beside him, as he directs attention to the villagers on either side the road, eagerly saluting the carriage. "See how glad they are; how true their welcome! It is an earnest of what our future relations shall be—theirs and ours. We must never cease to promote the welfare of these poor people."

"Never, Rupert; never."

"It used to be said 'The Lord of Pomeroy and his serfs.' I would rather it were said 'The Lord of Pomeroy and his attached followers.' What think you, love?"

Was there need to ask it? The beautiful face, full of righteous hope, was raised to his in response; the rich brown eyes were bedewed with tears of earnestness.

But Jeffs is taking the carriage swiftly up the approach; and, here they are at the great gateway, lined with expectant servitors. Rupert alights and hands out his wife; she wears blue silk and the prettiest white bonnet ever seen. The maids throw down their flowers for her to walk upon. Old Jerome advances a step; his white locks flowing, his hands raised as if in benediction; tears of joy running down his furrowed cheeks, his voice tremulous.

"Welcome home to the Lord and Lady of Pomeroy! May every blessing rest upon them!" he adds on his own account.

Rupert thanks him and shakes his hand. He shakes other hands that are held out. There stands Bridget, all green and violet; there stands Mrs. Rex, the housekeeper, old now, in stiff grey brocade; there stands Cox, the custodian; there stand they all. Father Andrew comes forward in full bloom. Annaline, shyly blushing, follows her husband's example, and timidly puts out her hand.

Then Rupert leads her up stairs into the midst of the family gathered there in greeting: Sybilla, Joan, Mary; and Leolin and his wife, whose stay was drawing to a close.

"Mother, why did you do this?" says Rupert in a pained tone, when he finds out the change she has made. "Why did you go back to the south wing?"

"Because I like it, and feel most at home in it, Rupert; and because it is my proper abode."

"Annaline and I have been hoping to keep you with us always."

"And so you will keep me: shall I not be under the same roof? No, my children," she added, affectionately taking their hands in hers, "we must not be quite together: you must have your household, and I mine. Do not we all want to domineer on our own proper score?"—laughing gently. "Joan has taken so great a fancy to you both that she intends to be with me very often—and you will have to take care that you do not get too much of our company."

"And how is it, Mary, that you have left the abbey—you and your mother?" questioned Rupert: as he turned to stand with Mary Pomeroy later at the open window.

"Mamma wished it. Grandmamma wants her."

"And what is this rumour that I hear about *you?*" he resumed, dropping his voice to a whisper and bending his concerned eyes upon her. "*Surely* you are not thinking of giving up the world?"

"How did you hear it?" returned Mary.

"Lady Anna spoke of it in a letter to Annaline. It cannot be true."

"It is true, Rupert. I must be in the world and of the world; or else I must be out of it: and I have chosen the latter. I am beginning to think it is my true vocation."

"But why are you choosing it? What is the reason?"

"Because I believe that I shall find my best happiness in it. I never was so happy in my life as when I was in the convent; no, not even when I was a wilful girl, ruling you and the abbey," she added laughingly; "I never quitted any place with so much regret. I am going to it to-morrow. I only waited to see you and Annaline."

Turning, she held out her hand. Lady Annaline came to her at once in answer, a loving, grateful look upon her face.

"I have been telling your husband that I am going into the convent; he wanted to know if the rumour could be true," said Mary, passing her arm round Annaline's waist. "But I am not in yet; I waited to say a word of welcome to you and to him. Rupert—Annaline—I wish you both all the happiness the world can give. I pray daily that Heaven's blessings may rest upon you."

There ensued a pause of emotion. Rupert parted them, putting his own arm round each.

"I never thought to hear this news, Mary. Though I have gained a wife, it seems I am to lose a sister."

"Don't make too sure of losing me," returned Mary, with a touch of her old sauciness. "It is not to be yet. Mamma was so angry at, what she calls, my ingratitude, and grandmamma read me so severe a lecture about the duty children owe their parents, that I came to a compromise. The convent will be my home; but at present I shall not take any vows, and can come abroad when I choose. The White House will see me every day; and you now and then here at the abbey."

Annaline clasped her hands. "I was afraid ——"

"You were afraid of all kinds of silly things," said Mary, smiling at her, "and especially afraid of me. There is no need to be, Annaline."

Leaning across Rupert, Mary kissed her. "It is just as I hoped," Rupert whispered.

"For a little time," answered Mary; "how long or how short, I know not. And then I shall bid good bye to you and the world for ever."

"Do not anticipate it. It may never come."

"Do not you seek to dissuade me, Rupert; it would be nothing less than a sin," said she, correcting him. "You and your wife will find your duty and happiness in the world, and it is quite right that you should; I in serving Heaven. Whatever may be our particular vocation here, may we all prove ourselves so faithful in it as to meet there hereafter."

"Amen," breathed the Lord of Pomeroy.

THE END.

PERPÉTUE:

A Sketch.

By Julia Kavanagh.

AMONGST my dear mother's illusions was one which often surprised and indeed perplexed me. It was that as I had never left her from the day of my birth, she had necessarily formed my character. Now, I will venture to say that the reverse was the case, and that if there had been any forming of character between us, it had taken the contrary route. My gentle mother could not bear to think, and very early cast that burden upon my shoulders. I took it willingly enough, for being young I fancied myself equal to anything; and so far as thinking for another person can do the thing, I certainly formed the character of my dear mother from the time I was fifteen till the sad day on which I lost her.

But it does not follow from this that my character was not formed by some one, and that some one was Perpétue Saurel.

Perpétue was our servant. She had a heedless young handmaiden under her, Mélanie Legrand; but she, Perpétue, was the servant at the château and was known as such throughout Gravilles.

Bold indeed would have been Mélanie's heart if she had dared to assume any other position than that of Perpétue's assistant. With the master and mistress who paid her wages and gave her board and lodging Mélanie was supposed to have no connection: she belonged to Perpétue.

I remember Perpétue very well, though she died when I was little more than a child. She was a tall bony woman of fifty, with a squint in her brown eye. Yet she had been handsome, and her face had a sort of stern good humour in it which attracted children. My brother John and I loved her dearly, and though she could be rough, and even swear at us every now and then, she spoiled us dreadfully, and was never happy when we were out of her sight. Her swearing, though it was by no means of a profane kind, was very objectionable to my dear mother. Unluckily she did not know French when we came to Gravilles, and she never discovered Perpétue's weakness till she had had her two years and could not do without her. Then, indeed, she argued and remonstrated, and Perpétue laughed and promised to mend, but she did not; and my dear mother, who grew rather deaf about this time, innocently boasted that she had cured Perpétue of her evil ways; and whenever mistresses lamented over the deficiencies of their servant, wondered they did not do as she did and improve the culprits: her system, she said, was to be firm and just.

Perpétue knew she was all wrong and said so. But she was a native of Burgundy, and to the wine of her native province she also

laid the blame of her wrong-doing. "It was all very well for people to be cool and phlegmatic upon cider," she said; "but wine was a warm and generous drink; it made your blood flow more freely and it loosened your tongue. May be it also gave you a certain quickness of temper and a certain freedom of speech; but then wine was wine and cider was cider."

Dear old Perpétue—she seemed very old to me then—if Burgundy gave you your true loyal heart, so tender and so faithful, if it gave you the sincere honest tongue which never uttered a falsehood, what a noble vintage it must be!

Perpétue had been handsome in her youth and she had had her love story. She told me all about it, and I listened devoutly in the old stone room on the ground floor, where Perpétue sat in the evening when her work was done.

"My mother would not let me marry him," said Perpétue solemnly; "so as he wanted a wife to keep house for him, he married another girl. They lived in a village three leagues off, but I heard of it of course. I said to my mother: 'Now I shall marry the first man who asks me,' and so I did. My first love's wife died before the year was out. I suppose he had not forgotten me, for he came to our place, entered the wine shop and asked my husband, who happened to be there, if he knew Perpétue Saurel. 'Yes, I do,' he answered, 'she is my third cousin.' 'And is it true that she is married?' he asked. 'Oh! yes, and her husband beats her every day of her life,' for you see he knew my old lover and wanted to teaze him. He sighed on hearing that, and said, 'God forgive him! I should have liked to marry her.' Upon this my husband laughed, told him who he was, and brought him home to supper. We were all three very friendly, but he came no more. He could not marry me and he wanted a wife. He soon found one, and she was as happy with him as his first wife had been."

"But your husband did not beat you, Perpétue," I said, indignantly.

"Oh! no," she replied, quietly; "that is to say he beat me once," she added, her brown face flushing and her eyes taking an angry light; "but he never did it again."

If Perpétue had informed me that, taking up a stick, she had given her husband a sound cudgelling, I should have believed her, such was my faith in her prowess; but Perpétue had secured impunity by other means, as I soon learned.

"You see," she said, "he was the easiest and best of men, poor fellow, but he was weak and he liked his glass of wine, and Burgundy is not Norman cider. So he came home one evening rather flushed and warm. I scolded, and though I had my first child, then a baby, in my arms, he turned round and struck me. The blow sobered us both. He stood up and stared at me, and I got up and faced him. 'You have beaten me,' I said, 'and I will not live with a blow. One of us must die: let it be me; I am disgraced; kill me, then; kill mother

and child. Kill me, I tell you.' I put myself before him, but he put me away so, with his hand. 'Do not,' he said, 'do not—you can surely see how grieved I am at having touched you.' I do believe," continued Perpétue, "he was cut to the heart, so I forgave him and he never struck me again, poor fellow."

Perpétue was sitting by the open window. The warm western light came in, and its glow was full on her brown face. I saw her eyes grow dim, and her lips quiver. Poor Perpétue! she never could speak of her dead husband without emotion. He had been foolish, a spendthrift, what is called a good-for-nothing fellow, but her heart overflowed with indulgence and forgiveness for all his sins. She had not loved him. A less generous woman would have hated him for that very reason, but there was a lofty strain in Perpétue which forbade such meanness. Her husband was her elder by many years, and grew irremediably foolish and extravagant towards the close of his life. One of his fits of folly had brought him to Gravilles, and Perpétue had followed him, breaking every tie of home and kindred to cling to him.

"The poor dear man," she said to me; "he did not know what he was doing, to be sure, but it was not because I had not married him for love that I would have forsaken him in his old age. Our children were dead, but he was still my husband. So I followed him and took care of him till the end came; then, not caring to go home, I stayed here and became the servant of the château."

How fresh these strong hearts keep to the last! This woman whose head was grey could not forget her young love. She could not forget that thirty years before she had loved one man and married another. She could not forget that though she had neither deceived nor betrayed her husband she had withheld something from him, something he knew not how to win, and which she could not give. And so, because he had not been loved, the silly, worthless fellow was forgiven again and again. Because he had not been loved he received tenderness and devotion without stint. I know that of all the graves in the churchyard of Gravilles none had a greener sod and brighter flowers than his, and I know too, though Pepétue never told me so, that living or dead he owed it all to the fond remembrance she kept of her first love. She could not forget her lost happiness, and remembering it too tenderly, perhaps, she, so quick, so impatient, and indeed sarcastic, was humbled into the meekness of a loving wife.

Children admire spirit and strength, and as Perpétue had both in an extraordinary degree I admired her greatly. To her I owe my first sense of the heroic, my first knowledge of honour and self-denial, and it is but fair to add, my first efforts in the noble art of impertinence. Perpétue was coolly impertinent—not rude, but impertinent. Her tongue was pitiless and her smile was something to remember. I tried to imitate her, but fortunately mine was only

the poor weak copy of a noble original, and not having been reared on Burgundy, but on heavy beer and cider, I failed.

Mélanie Legrand took Perpétue's place, but she never lost her reverence for that deceased potentate. Perpétue's sayings and doings were her law, and she quoted them for ever. There had been a splendid variety in Perpétue. She was ardent and tender, haughty, impetuous, sarcastic, and warm hearted, but Mélanie's nature admitted of no such compounds. She had but one individual feature, and that was not of the grand order. Hence I suppose she had received and still bore the impress of Perpétue's stronger nature. She was a little round-bodied woman with a foolish face, and the greediest appetite for the marvellous I ever saw in a human being. This appetite she, little by little, imparted to me. Mélanie was a good cook and excelled in confectionery, which art it was thought desirable that I should learn; but whilst my dear mother fancied that I was studying pastry and preserves, I was, I blush to say it, learning the secret of the Black Hen, or acquiring the terrible knowledge without which there is no making the Hand of Glory.

Mélanie did not deal in the black art, for being a good Christian and a great coward, she never ventured on practice; but, in theory, Mélanie was perfect, and the minuteness and variety of her knowledge amazed and perplexed me. If Mélanie had been maid of honour or mistress of the robes in the world of which Lucifer is emperor, she could not have been more glibly conversant than she was with the court over which it is that monarch's lot to reign. I remember how uncomfortable the particulars into which Mélanie entered made me feel one evening that we were making jam together in the château kitchen. We had begun our jam very late; the consequence was that twilight stole upon us before our apricots were boiled sufficiently. The kitchen was never a bright one, for heavy trees shed a green gloom close by it all the day long, and it had now no other light than that which came from the fire, over which hung a huge caldron. Fitful gleams danced on the high stone walls, and lit up a row of copper casseroles, bright as red gold. It had rained all day, and, though a star now peeped in at us through the shivering foliage of a young aspen tree, the evening was chill, and the fire on the hearth felt pleasant. I was conscious of a picturesque yet homely charm in everything around me, when Mélanie began: "Can Mademoiselle tell me why it is that Lucifer is emperor, and Beelzebub is only prince?"

I had been weaving a sort of fairy tale around that old kitchen, when Mélanie's question conveyed me to a necromancer's den with a witch stirring some horrible compound that simmered and bubbled over the fire, whilst a sneering head with long ass's ears grinned in at us from behind the window panes.

"*I* do not see why Beelzebub should not be first?" argued Mélanie, who had a spice of revolutionary spirit in her this evening; "and

my opinion is," she confidentially added, "that he will try and get the upper hand yet." That I cared very little about, and I said so.

"Then there is Astaret, the grand duke," meditatively continued Mélanie. "I wonder with whom *he* will side, though I daresay the dangerous man is Satanachia. Being general, you know, he has all the troops under him. Millions and millions of evil spirits," continued Mélanie, warming with her subject. "Why, what a horrible thing it would be, Mademoiselle, if they should all take to fighting!"

"Yes, Mélanie, very horrible. Are you sure the jam is not burning?"

"Am I sure!" cried Mélanie in high dudgeon; "have I been making jam this twenty years, and does Mademoiselle suppose that I would let jam burn at my time of life? I will venture to say that Lucifugé, who rules all the treasures of the earth, does not know his business better than I do mine. Baël is under him," she thoughtfully added, "and there are thousands under Baël! What a prodigious quantity of treasure they must see. Ah! if one had only the heart to try the secret of the black hen one might soon grow rich, Mademoiselle."

This secret of the black hen Mélanie had often alluded to, but never told me. Curiosity proved stronger than fear, and I pressed her to reveal it.

"Take a black hen," said Mélanie: and oh! how her little eyes rolled in her round face, and how her weak, shrill voice became suddenly solemn: "take a young black hen, say at eleven at night, but do not make her scream or squeak on any account. Hold her tight, so, but mind you do not choke her. Then go with her to any spot where two roads meet, suppose at the end of the orchard; then when you hear midnight strike, make a circle on the ground with a cypress wand, stand in the middle of it, cut the hen in two, and say three times: 'Eloim Essaim, frugativi et appellavi.' Then turn to the east, kneel down and pray."

"To whom, Mélanie?" I could not help asking.

"Never mind," she curtly replied. "When your prayer is over utter the great summons and, lo and behold you! the evil spirit himself will come at your bidding."

I do not mind confessing that when Mélanie came to this part of her narrative, a gentle thrill, a sense of creeping, and a little shiver stole over me, but it was a sort of pleasing fear, a mild horror if I may say so, and I liked it. "Then," continued, or rather resumed Mélanie, after an impressive pause, "you will see him in a scarlet laced coat, yellow vest, and green pantaloons."

"And what is his face like, Mélanie?"

"He has a dog's head, ass's ears, and horns and hoofs besides," glibly answered Mélanie. "And he will ask to know your bidding, and you have only to speak, to become rich, mighty, and so on; only mind you are in a state of grace, else the evil spirit will make you obey *him*."

We had a black hen, a young one too, and as Mélanie spoke, there came to me a vision of a girlish form stealing to the henroost, clasping the devoted bird tight around the neck, and creeping to the spot where the cross roads met. But no! I could go no further. I confess that the hand of glory frightened me too much to lead to such illusions. The hand of glory is a dead man's hand, and that dead man must have been hung or beheaded. Mélanie knew to a tittle how it was to be salted, then dried in the sun, or simply baked. This hand is destined to hold a magic candle, made with Lapland sesame and virgin wax. "Light this candle," said Mélanie, "and put it in the hand; then go about with it, and in whatsoever place you enter, people remain motionless, spell-bound as it were, and," Mélanie added, unctuously, "you can do as you please!"

Mélanie was as honest as gold, but she grew unctuous again at this vision.

I was very indignant at this hand of glory, and wanted to know if there was no remedy. There was one, but Mélanie was cold upon it, and delighted only in the hand of glory, which had been patronized, she told me, by all the eminent thieves and brigands, Cartouche, Mandrin, and the rest.

Another of her secrets I liked better.

This, too, related to the discovery of treasure. A candle made of human grease was fixed in a piece of cendrier in the form of a crescent. This candle threw out sparks when it burned near a hidden treasure, and went out when close to it.

"Oh! Mélanie, that is dreadful."

"Not at all. You have a lighted lantern at hand. Sometimes, however, there are dead souls who keep the treasure, upon which a blessed wax candle is put in the lantern, and you may as well ask those poor souls how you are to set them at rest."

The gathering of witches, and the toads, goats, black cats, &c., who appeared amongst the foul spirits were also favourite topics with Mélanie. And then Mélanie could tell fortunes by cards or coffee-grounds. She could even shake her head over the palm of a hand and be learned concerning the line of life. In dreams Mélanie was also potent, though I cannot say that her interpretations ever came to pass. This rather shook my faith in her, and there came a time when the secret of the black hen left me cold and the hand of glory made me laugh. Yes, little by little my faith had grown cold, and that world of my youth—not the wisest or the best—had left me to return no more.

MARTIN AND CLARE: POETS OF THE PEOPLE.*

By Mrs. Jerome Mercier.

IN the autumn of the year 1876 a voice which had a message for the world was silenced for ever in the grave. John Martin, born of humble parents at Wapping, on the 26th of November, 1846, followed the profession of a Schoolmaster, without any respite, relaxation, or earthly pleasure whatsoever, and after long suffering closed a weary life of twenty-nine years on October the 13th, 1876.

And this was all: one short paragraph sums up the history of a man who was not quite a "mute inglorious Milton," but certainly a deep and just thinker. His nature was full of sympathy with his fellow-creatures, and longing for their sympathy in return; and if our view of life were bounded by the end of earthly existence, we must needs say these were fatal gifts to him; for he was condemned to a constant isolation, the unformed minds of his scholars being the only minds with which he habitually came into contact. No words can paint more touchingly than his own the pain which this spiritual solitude entailed.

"This desire to say something" (so he writes in his diary), "is somewhat of a mournful one. It is the cry of pain from a wounded heart, *the upward striving of a wingless bird*, the yearning look into the dim future of the dying man, the wish to have from the mouldering grave a voice in the direction of the destiny of men, a warm place in the fireside of their hearts."

"The upward striving of a wingless bird" is one of those utterances which are, as it were, a key to the inner being of the writer, and which can only proceed from a poet, one who with a few keen words can pierce the hearts of men, and reveal to them their own joys or sorrows.

"The upward striving of a wingless bird"—a phrase worthy of any poet—is the fittest possible expression for that instinctive yet ever unsatisfied longing which is the essential note of subjective poetry. Words which make us feel our own longings; silent, perhaps, till this magic breath from an unknown land reveals them to us. A poet is a human enigma to which God alone knows the answer. It was in the nature of his being that John Martin should yearn in vain for self-expression and union with his fellows. Sympathy was not denied him by men. One chosen friend he had in a humble sphere of life; a person who must have been, like himself, of fine

* *A Legacy*. Written and edited by the Author of "John Halifax, Gentleman." (Hurst and Blackett.) *Life and Remains of John Clare*, by J. L. Cherry. (Warne.)

mind and instincts. The clergy with whom his calling brought him into contact were friendly and appreciative; and the editor of his few literary remains was for years full of kindness for him. But it is plain that from all—except, perhaps, that one friend—he enclosed himself in a shell of reserve. He had the noble pride which cannot bear to make demands on others; and for that very reason he could open his poor aching heart to none but the one companion whose own poverty forbade him to be of service in a worldly point of view. The nature which made Charlotte Brontë's life one long cry of pain was bestowed on Martin. As a poet whose lips God had opened has expressed it—

"High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river;
And hacked and hewed as a great god can
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf, indeed,
To prove it fresh from the river.
* * * *
"Making a poet out of a man;
The true gods sigh for the cost and the pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river."*

But with this enforced reticence, this closing of the hands over an ever-open wound, came the concomitant gift of a delicate spiritual touch, a sensitiveness to the beauties of nature and of art. As we read the diary, which is almost all that remains to us of this precious life, we wonder at the polished phrases, the vivid words, which are the setting of some experience that comes we know not whence. Take, for instance, this passage, with its just comparisons of music and painting. Whence has he acquired the requisite knowledge?—

"For the last two months of the year, as I know from experience, fit and proper are funeral chants of low, wailing, inexpressibly sad solemnity. Part of the gloom enshrouding that portion of the year is due to the short, gloomy days; part to the sombre time of Advent; part, in my case, to the fact that misfortunes have mostly come to me at that period. One of those old gregorian chants has, at such a time, an indescribable influence upon me.

"Many of these chants are weirdly pathetic; there is a richness of colour saturating them which at first thought would appear suggestive of equally warm emotions: but though the ensemble is dazzlingly rich, there is an undercoating of hard, rigid colours, a simplicity in design, a suggestion of woes unutterable, such as greatly to remind us of some of the pictures of the Italian school. It is a luxury—for we are told that there is a luxury in grief—to listen to one of these melancholy chants. On its waves of sound float intermingled suggestions of joyful pain, of painful joy. One

* Mrs. Browning.

seems to be dissolved from bodily fetters, and to be gliding along that majestic river. At such a moment nothing in life seems worth the having ; whatever we think becomes tinged with a mournful hue. Ambition, love, wealth, friendship, comfort—all these things we would willingly surrender all ideas of having or pursuing, till—till the music ceases, and the spell is withdrawn. Some echoes of the spiritual voice (for without doubt there is something heavenly in music) haunt us, but these are like voices of the night. We think as little of them as we do of dreams, which, all-absorbing at the time of their occurrence, flit like bats from the great calm eye of day."

Of Martin's poems we can say little. He had not the power of expressing himself in verse. Perhaps he had too much culture, too profound thought for that. As Macaulay has observed—"the higher civilization is often against the instinct-breathing song of emotional poetry." This we find in far higher quality in the poorer mind but richer nature of John Clare.

He—born in the village of Helpstone, in Northamptonshire, on July 13, 1793—had, like Martin, a sickly constitution, with high nervous susceptibility. In Clare's case, the latter, unbalanced by systematic culture of the brain, induced mental disorder; and after a troubled life, chequered by flashes of popular success, he died in the Northampton Asylum, May 20, 1864. His case was more calculated to excite sympathy than Martin's. The child of pauper parents; taught in a village school which he quitted at the age of seven, receiving later some superior instruction in a night-school; indebted for his introduction to the arts of poetry and song to the ditties of a certain "Granny Bains," who was gifted with a good memory for verse, he was in a position to be patronized by the benevolent, or by those who feel a curiosity in the notorieties of the day. His nature was essentially poetic. At the age of fourteen he scrawled rude verses. His humble childhood enabled him to receive benefits without a sense of mortification. Martin, on the contrary, stood in the isolated position of superiority to his own social class. The culture attainable in London, and under the eye of the clergy (although he never attended a training college), placed him in a different rank from Clare's, while a proud reticence kept his heart and its sorrows a closed book to his superiors. But the poet's inner nature must ever be a closed book. Its pangs may be told in his verses—may awaken many a responsive chord—and yet the *man* in his passionate suffering be a secret cipher unread by human eye. Could Martin have expressed himself as Clare in his wild-bird song was able to do, he could not have painted this intense solitude better than Clare in the following words :—

> "I am ! yet what I am, who cares, or knows ?
> My friends forsake me like a memory lost.
> I am the self-consumer of my woes—

They rise and vanish, an oblivious host,
Shadows of life, whose very soul is lost ;
And yet I am—I live—though I am tossed
Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
Into the living sea of waking dream,
Where there is neither sense of life, nor joys,
But the huge shipwreck of my own esteem ;
And all that's dear—even those I loved the best—
Are strange—nay, they are stranger than the rest.
I long for scenes where man has never trod—
For scenes where woman never smiled or wept—
There to abide with my creator, God,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,
Full of high thoughts unborn. So let me lie,
The grass below ; above, the vaulted sky."

Clare had known that saddest trial, "the huge shipwreck of his own esteem," which Martin never knew. Martin's well-regulated nature, though it passed through some fiery trial of misery, concerning which he implored silence from the good clergyman who stood his friend through it all, yet rose purified from the flames. He was the stay of those members of his family who needed advice or help ; he was never dependent on charity, and scarcely ever asked even a small favour. Moreover, we do not hear that the passion of love ever opened out the inner depths of his being. Known only to himself and to his God, ever respected, ever silent and alone, he passed through life. Clare had a touching love-story. When a lad of sixteen, he saw a lovely country girl—a sweet wild flower—twining into a garland flowers no sweeter than herself. She was seated on a stile, and the poet-youth came by. For a few months he rejoiced in the society of his Mary. Then her father forbade their meetings. He married another—a good, kind wife ; but thirty years later, when the tired brain was tottering, he said he had seen Mary pass his window. She had long been in her grave, but merciful fancy gave her back to him, and he would speak to his wife as "Mary."

To her, in happier days, he addressed these lines :—

"I love thee, sweet Mary, but love thee in fear ;
Were I but the morning breeze, healthful and airy,
As thou goest a-walking I'd breathe in thine ear,
And whisper and sigh how I love thee, my Mary.

"I wish but to touch thee, but wish it in vain ;
Wert thou but a streamlet, a-winding so clearly,
And I little globules of soft dropping rain,
How fond would I press thy white bosom, my Mary.

"I would steal a kiss, but I dare not presume ;
Wert thou but a rose in thy garden, sweet fairy,
And I a bold bee for to rifle its bloom,
A whole summer's day would I kiss thee, my Mary.

"I long to be with thee, but cannot tell how ;
Wert thou but the elder that grows by thy dairy,
And I the blest woodbine to twine on the bough,
I'd embrace thee and cling to thee ever, my Mary."

With the sensitive nature which could love, came also the weakness that could fall ; and poor Clare, like Burns, was forced by occasional excess to exchange esteem for pity. A gentle wavering nature, overbalanced by the terrible gift of genius, he was gradually crushed under the weight of circumstances. He was patronised by the great, advised by the kind, accepted as a brother by men of talent ; but he had to contend with the irresistible force of custom. Custom lay "upon him with a weight heavy as frost, and deep almost as life." What can we say of the value of that glorious gem, poetical genius, in the possession of a poor man ? Can we praise it as a treasure ? Not to him, surely, though he may endow others richly with its price. Martin, in a poem called "The Dead Poet," has told us what poverty was in the world's eyes :—

"All the bitter awful cries,
Daily speeding to the skies ;
All our sorrows, all our woes,
All the innocent blood that flows
Asking Heaven, ever, ever,
For a vengeance hard but just ;
All the monstrous sins that sever
Men from God, are e'en as dust
When compared, in human eye,
With the monster Poverty."

The poetical nature with its refinement, its delicate yearning, coupled for ever in this world with the human nature coarsened by unavoidable daily contact with coarse things, must make life indeed "like the upward striving of a wingless bird," or the efforts at growth of a tree bound in iron bands. Infinite pity fills our hearts as we think of it. All the compensation we can look for is in that "better land" where we hope that spirit may meet spirit, and work unfettered and free. And for this world, we may perhaps find for such laden souls the compensation that was the lot of the blighted fig-tree—blighted at the Divine word to teach mankind a lesson which still resounds in their ears, and through which many a human life has borne blessed fruit. If we are all one—one body with many members—we may see a justice which should humble and subdue our pride, in the truth that we grow and stand not only on the ruin of our old selves, but also on the loss and weary suffering of others. Only such thoughts can soften the sad memory of poor Clare dying in the madhouse, and dreaming of his lost love ; and of John Martin gazing at the pile of his unpublished manuscripts in the last hours before his death.

A YEAR'S RECORD.

SPRING.

"IT is very awkward; what can I do?" murmured Miss Beatrice Thorneycroft to herself. And not without reason did she complain; for the young lady was very literally and practically in the position in which statesmen and some others occasionally find themselves: afraid to go forward, and unable to go back.

This fair earth was looking her fairest; her ample robe of green was fresh and new, as yet neither faded by Midsummer suns, nor torn by autumn winds. All tender and delicate and flower-decked, the land smiled in her radiancy of beauty. And the young girl, who was the central figure of the joyous pastoral landscape, matched well the bright May morning. With her also it was the springtide of youth and hope; she was just eighteen, and no opening blossom around was sweeter and lovelier than her fair face —notwithstanding the expression of perplexity that it wore at the moment as a result of her situation. In truth, Miss Beatrice Thorneycroft was standing, a prisoner against her will, upon a large stone in the middle of a stream. At that point there was a path through some fields affording a short road to a cluster of cottages on a neighbouring estate, and some stepping-stones had been placed by the rustic population for their use in crossing the river; but a late heavy rain had swollen the stream, and thereby dislodged the stones, to the inconvenience of Miss Thorneycroft.

"I wonder how deep the water is, and whether I had better not make a jump, whatever the consequences may be?" said the girl. And she shook her pretty head and looked after the rushing stream with a mournful expression upon her countenance, as though she were puzzled by its inconsiderateness in continuing, under the circumstances, to flow.

"May I have the pleasure of helping you?" said a voice in polite reply. But the excellent intentions of the speaker were nearly being at once frustrated, for the sudden tones gave Miss Thorneycroft so great a shock as almost to precipitate her backwards into the stream.

"Where did you come from?" asked the girl, when she had recovered her self-possession and her balance.

"From above—I mean higher up the river," answered the young man, replacing his hat upon his head. "Do you not know me?"

"No," answered Beatrice, lifting her blue eyes and staring at him with a curiosity childlike in its candour. The young man laughed,

and there was something familiar in the sound that at once struck a chord in her memory. "Unless," she added in a doubtful tone, "unless you are Herbert Len—Mr. Herbert Lennox, I should say."

"No, you should not," said he smiling; and Beatrice Thorneycroft wondered how she could have been so stupid as not to have recognized him at once, despite the changes that some years travel in warm countries had wrought in his appearance. There were the same dark eyes, so deep and soft until some passing jest sent a sparkle of light into them; the same brown face, which kindled at intervals, as though an unseen light shone upon it, as only very dark complexions will illumine; the same glittering teeth gleaming in the ever-ready smile and laugh.

"You are changed also; but I knew you at once," Lennox went on to say, thinking that in all his wanderings he had never stumbled on a fairer image than the girl before him, as she stood poised upon the stone with her pretty summer drapery caught up in one slender hand beyond the water's reach. These two had been playfellows and friends from their earliest recollections: he, as the nephew and adopted son of Mr. Lennox, of the Manor; and Beatrice, the only child of Mansel Thorneycroft, of Silver Dale. They had grown up together as neighbours and companions, until Herbert's departure had effected a separation. Immediately following this event had come another change. A feud and enmity born of a suit at law had supplanted the ancient friendship that had existed between Mr. Thorneycroft and Mr. Lennox; and the ill-feeling had developed into a bitter hatred and undying enmity, manifested upon all occasions.

"Are you not tired of that solitude yet?" asked Lennox.

"Quite, but I am a prisoner," answered Beatrice, in a little tone of melancholy. "I find it now to be too long a jump to that strip of shingle, and I can't go back, because one of the stepping-stones has turned over."

"May I come and lift you across?" was his proposal upon the conclusion of her tale of distress.

"Certainly not"—with much emphasis and decision.

"Then you intend to remain, a species of nineteenth-century Naiad? Will you allow me to have the honour of fetching you some lunch, a chair, and an umbrella? Perhaps there are a few more things that you would like for a lengthened stay?"

"Don't jeer at misfortune, but think what I can do," said Miss Thorneycroft peremptorily; and the pretty imperious manner recalled to his mind the charming wilful child, whom he had been in the habit of alternately teasing and petting with the condescension of a six or seven years' seniority.

"I see precisely three courses before you, Miss Thorneycroft."

Beatrice raised her face inquiringly, and, pushing back her broad straw hat, looked up at him with eyes as blue and bright as sapphires.

"First," he began, "you may step down from that stone and walk to the bank. It will conduce neither to your comfort nor to your personal appearance; but you have probably a mind above such trifling considerations. Secondly, you may make a spring for the bank; and you will inevitably fall short, and take a cold-water bath at what I should consider an inconvenient hour and under disadvantageous circumstances. Your third course is sensibly to permit me to lift you across."

Having stated the case with this preciseness, Mr. Lennox waited gravely for her decision.

Miss Thorneycroft reserved judgment and parleyed with him. "But why should you get wet?" she demanded.

"With me it is a deed accomplished. I have been walking up and down the stream all the morning."

"Indeed! Is the river-bed your usual field of exercise?"

"No, but I have been fishing; my rod and basket are somewhere about," said he, jumping down and stepping to her side.

"It is too bad that this place should be in such a state," argued Beatrice, drawing up her head and attempting to look dignified, and only succeeding in knocking her hat off.

"A great deal too bad," said Lennox sympathetically, as he felt the ground beneath his feet; and the next moment Miss Thorneycroft was raised, hat, dignity, and all, into his strong arms and deposited in safety upon the opposite bank.

"Thank you, I am very much obliged," said she, quietly and gratefully, as soon as she stood upon her own feet and had collected herself; but a faint flush still burnt upon her fair cheeks. "I am afraid I was very heavy."

"With care I think my constitution will recover the exertion."

"I hope so," she answered smiling, and was extending her hand to bid him farewell; but the young man began to saunter on beside her. Roads are common property; and one cannot dictate to any person where his proper way lies.

"Isn't it a famous sort of a morning?" said Mr. Lennox, looking with a condescending approval at the fair face of nature, as she lay basking in the favour of her lord, the sun. "And isn't this like the old times? We must see a great deal of each other, Beatrice."

"The times are very much altered," said Miss Thorneycroft. "Your uncle and my father never meet. You must be aware of it."

"Oh! I've heard that there's a coolness on account of a law suit that some meddlesome fool of a bailiff brought about; but all that must be changed."

"I don't think it will be," said Beatrice, quietly.

"Nonsense! such old friends and neighbours cannot quarrel."

"You will see," returned the girl, with the same composed conviction. "You will find that it is beyond help and beyond hope now." And time proved Miss Thorneycroft's prediction to

be right, as Mr. Lennox discovered to his perpetual chagrin and dismay.

When Mr. Lennox found Miss Thorneycroft in her captivity the sun was at his highest, the hum of the bees, the murmur of the stream, and the distant call of the labourer alone broke the noontide quiet. When they parted, the sun had accomplished a fair portion of his downward journey, the bees were commencing to fly homewards, and the labourer to turn his thoughts to the evening meal and rest.

And even then Mr. Lennox seemed loath to let her go. "When shall I see you again, Beatrice?" asked he, as he held her hand at parting. "Are you going to Mrs. Hill's tennis-party on Wednesday?"

"I am asked," replied Miss Thorneycroft, oracularly: and then she turned into her own avenue in the most uncompromising manner.

AUTUMN.

It was nine o'clock in the morning, the month October. At Silver Dale a servant had just brought in the breakfast, and removed the covers; which service concluded, he, according to habit, quitted the room, the custom permitting Mr. Thorneycroft and his daughter to converse in the greater privacy. In vain, though, was the precaution taken on this morning, for, after surveying her father's countenance Miss Beatrice sipped her tea in a silence that was discreet. There was not a kinder man living than Mr. Thorneycroft when he was in his senses; but when he lost his temper he absolutely lost himself and his senses with it: and he was given at intervals to these fits of passion. Therefore, aware of his weakness, Miss Thorneycroft forbore to speak, as she watched him tearing open his letters, and flinging pieces of toast to his favourite dog as though they had been shots at an enemy. Finally, after peppering his poached egg until nothing was left of the wholesome edible but a dream and a remembrance, Mr. Thorneycroft dropped a spoonful of mustard into his coffee, stirred it vigorously, and, before his daughter could stop him, took a gulp of the liquid.

The result of the bold experiment was unsatisfactory.

"What—what the—" his bandanna received the remainder of the sentence. And perhaps it was as well, for the next word promised to be a strong one.

When he had in a measure recovered the coughing and choking that ensued, Mr. Thorneycroft rang the bell with such force as to cause the house to resound again, and the footman to be in the room in half the time that that functionary generally required to answer a summons.

"Take that stuff away, and bring me some decent coffee," said the

master of the establishment with deep disgust, from his place at the foot of the table.

"A fresh cup-and-saucer is what is wanted, James," said the youthful mistress, with calmness, from her place at the head.

James looked with mild reproach from one to the other; but at length the Machiavellian policy occurred to his mind of obeying both, upon which his countenance cleared, and he retired. While, though, he was in the act of desiring the cook to make the coffee, the bell above his head pealed more violently than before. He hurried upstairs once more, determining to resign his situation, as so much exercise must be injurious to his constitution.

"Have you brought me a cup? go for it and stop the coffee being made."

"Master is in one of his tantrums," was the comment of the cook, who was an old servant in the family. "He'll be like a lamb after this."

The unhappy young footman thought that the sooner the lamblike era set in, and the lionlike one set out, the better.

"Yet you permitted me to drink it, and to make a fool of myself before the servant," growled Mr. Thorneycroft, upon his mistake being discovered to him. "The fact is," added he, "I am quite upset this morning."

"What is the matter? Was not the party last night a pleasant one?" asked Beatrice, in reference to a dinner-party at which Mr. Thorneycroft had been present the previous evening.

"No, it was a most unpleasant one."

"That was a pity."

"Beatrice," resumed her father, "you are getting talked of."

Her fame appeared to take Miss Thorneycroft by surprise. "I am!" she exclaimed, in a tone of astonishment. "What have I done?"

"Has that young Lennox being dangling after you, and have you been receiving attention from him? Anson had the insolence to congratulate me upon your approaching marriage. My first inclination was to knock him down."

"Did you do it?" said Miss Thorneycroft, shirking the more personal subject.

"No; but I am sorry now I didn't."

Beatrice thought that Mr. Anson's sentiment upon the question would probably have been an opposite one.

"I know Anson is a fool," pursued Mr. Thorneycroft; "but such a report could not have arisen out of nothing, Beatrice."

"Why should we not be friends with Herbert Lennox, papa?" asked Beatrice, bravely; but though she looked at him with bright courageous eyes, her face had already paled.

"'Why! why!' you can ask me why, when you know of my treatment at the hands of his uncle! I should have thought that you would have had more respect for your father than to have spoken to the fellow."

"Papa, I think you are unreasonable. Of course I have repeatedly met Mr. Herbert Lennox in society, and of course I have spoken to him."

"Very well, very well; then you mean to say that those men had some reason for talking as they did last night. Very well, young lady; I will see and put a stop to it in the future," foamed Mr. Thorneycroft; and, rising from his chair, he was preparing to leave the room, when Miss Thorneycroft laid her hand upon his arm.

"Papa, you are too late."

"Too late! What do you mean by too late?" cried he; but a glance at Beatrice's downcast eyes and flushed cheeks made her meaning tolerably plain to him. "Do you mean to tell me that that young scoundrel has presumed to address you?"

Miss Thorneycroft's head fell lower, and her cheeks deepened in tint as she murmured out an assent.

"And you didn't box his ears!" exclaimed Mr. Thorneycroft.

The young lady had apparently omitted that attention; at all events she did not lay claim to the merit of it. She only conveyed some fresh information in a lower tone of voice than ever.

"Herbert is coming to speak to you to-day," whispered Miss Thorneycroft.

"He shall be horsewhipped," roared Mr. Thorneycroft.

"Be reasonable, papa; and give him a hearing.

"I shall give him a taste of my horsewhip, and nothing more," answered the irate father; saying which he banged out of the room.

Left alone, Beatrice glanced from the still quivering door to the breakfast table, looking with its scattered envelopes and disordered equipage as if some strong breeze had passed over it; then gave her head a sad little shake.

It promised badly, she was obliged to own to herself with another mournful shake of her golden head. But she was used to the tempestuous ways of her father, and had learned long ago that his bark was worse than his bite, according to the popular expression; therefore she plucked up heart now, and fell to gathering the torn papers from the carpet in a business-like way. Her hopes must rest upon Herbert's appeal to her father's better feelings.

At the very outset, however, a fresh disappointment awaited the lovers. Mr. Thorneycroft did not attempt to horsewhip the aspirant to his daughter's hand; but he did worse. He refused to see him. When Mr. Lennox called he was informed that Mr. Thorneycroft was engaged, and if he had any communication to make he had better do so in writing. His colour was heightened, and he bit his lip with mortification as he descended the steps; but Lennox went straight home, and wrote a manly letter to Mr. Thorneycroft, asking for his daughter's hand in marriage.

This course was not without its consolations in so far that it saved him from the embarrassing explanation that his uncle did not

approve his choice. Mr. Lennox was a man of reserved and silent habits, guarded and temperate in speech upon all occasions, the very reverse of poor Mr. Thorneycroft; but perhaps the feeling of animosity against his neighbour had buried itself all the more deeply into his breast that he said little about it; and he was proud and obstinate, immovable in all his ideas and sentiments. So there was little hope of any healing of the breach from him: and when his nephew and adopted son Herbert had asked his consent to his marriage with Beatrice, it had been in few but very emphatic and bitter words that he had refused it.

Beatrice Thorneycroft knew of her father's having received young Lennox's letter, but was aware of nothing further; and she lived in a fever of suspense for a day or two. At the end of that time her doubts were cleared up sufficiently.

"I have had a letter from that young rascal," said Mr. Thorneycroft one day, bustling into Beatrice's sitting-room, and flinging down an open letter before that young lady. "I have answered it, I can promise you that. I have answered it!" And having entered the quiet apartment like a storm, he was preparing to quit it in a whirlwind.

"What answer did you send?" asked his daughter, detaining him.

"What answer? You ask me what answer? I said NO, NO, most unmistakably, and with no superabundance of soft words," replied Mr. Thorneycroft, once more attempting to escape.

"Stay, papa! I have a right to know more. Sit down and let us speak of this quietly."

"I will sit down or stand up just as I please in my own house, and it is my pleasure now to stand," said the master, trying to cover his discomfiture with bluster.

Miss Thorneycroft thereupon permitted him the right of liberty of posture; but, availing herself of the same freedom of choice, she sunk down upon a couch, which was close at hand.

"What objection have you to Herbert Lennox, papa?"

"Objection! I have every objection, and you shall never marry that man."

"It is unjust," exclaimed Beatrice, with a burst of tears. "We were brought up almost as children of one house, and were encouraged later in associating, and now with no fault we are treated thus."

"Now, my dear; now, my dear," remonstrated her father, taking a seat beside her, and pulling at the handkerchief, in which Miss Thorneycroft had buried her sorrows. "You know I can't stand tears."

"Don't you care for my happiness, papa?" sobbed Beatrice.

"Now, my dear, is that reasonable? I care everything for your happiness; and come and tell me that you want to marry any other man on the face of the earth, from a peer to a pauper, and I'll not say you nay, if your heart is set on it."

For that breadth of selection Miss Thorneycroft did not show the gratitude that she might have done. On the contrary, she exhibited a perverse disposition towards the only proscribed member of the human race.

"What fault, papa, do you find in Herbert?" asked she, lifting an eager face and bright eyes to his.

Mr. Thorneycroft availed himself of the lull in the storm. "I have already stated my objections to the young man, and I think, Beatrice, we may consider the whole matter concluded," said he, with as much importance and dignity as he could muster; then rose and quitted the scene before the white handkerchief, the weapon before which he quailed, could be introduced afresh.

CHRISTMAS.

THE next couple of months was a trying time for all concerned. Herbert Lennox and Beatrice Thorneycroft met occasionally at the houses of mutual acquaintances, and, as most of their neighbours were in the country now at this autumn season, they had a few more opportunities for meeting than they might otherwise have enjoyed; but as one or other of the elders was pretty sure to be present, and as even in the absence of that restriction there were the usual obligations of a social gathering to be considered, these glimpses of each other formed scant food for their ardent love. Perhaps its ardour kept it in life; love less deep and true must have been starved on such insufficient diet.

The young people were often asked at one and the same time by their common acquaintances, their seniors never: until one thoughtless little lady, Mrs. Mildmay, a new comer into the neighbourhood, giving an entertainment upon the 24th, to inaugurate the Christmas festivities, invited both Mr. Thorneycroft and Mr. Lennox to her gathering. Both accepted the invitation, and both went: and upon encountering each glared at the other, and turned his back.

Up went Mrs. Mildmay's hands in despair when her husband drew her attention to what she had done. "Well, to see such a thing in a civilized, not to say a Christian country, is a downright scandal, and at Christmas time too!"

But Mrs. Mildmay need not have wrung her hands in desolation, for the course that her guests took actively and literally in the commencement, they persisted in passively and figuratively. They kept their backs turned upon one another. The young people, on the contrary, had a good deal to say together: more than they could have thought it prudent to speak beneath the eyes of those dragons, their guardians; for, towards the close of the evening, Herbert Lennox drew Miss Thorneycroft out on to a balcony that communicated with the ball-room.

"Beatrice, I can bear this no longer," he burst forth, abruptly.

Her lover's complaints were interrupted by Miss Thorneycroft, in a practical manner. She gave an ostentatious little shiver.

"It is cold here! Where did I leave my cloak?"

"What a brute I was not to think of you!" cried Lennox, glancing at her white shoulders gleaming like snow in the moonlight.

Lifting the curtains, whose heavy folds alone shut off the dancers, for the windows stood wide for the sake of air, the young man re-entered the room. Thrown upon a chair close at hand, was a white shawl. It promised warmth; and without waiting to enter into the delicate question of ownership, Mr. Lennox helped himself to the article, and hurried back to Miss Thorneycroft, whom he found looking thoughtfully out upon the moonlight landscape.

"What have you there? Ah, my cloak!" she exclaimed with a start, when she was made aware of his hands wrapping her up, as though she had forgotten his quest and her chilliness. "Is it not a beautiful night?"

"Yes—no," answered the young man impatiently, suspecting that she was wishing to lead him off the subject of his wrongs. "I cannot bear this sort of life any longer. Speak to your father, Beatrice; he must be persuaded."

"If he were to be won over by twenty thousand words, do you think they would not be spoken by me? But he is not to be persuaded while this quarrel with your uncle lasts. Ours is a harder case even than Romeo and Juliet's," said the girl, with a gentle little smile, meaning only to win him from his dark and bitter mood.

And her innocent words gave Lennox the opportunity of making a proposal, which he had hitherto always failed in suggesting. One glance at her clear blue eyes, at her candid countenance, and the scheme of a clandestine marriage, which had long been present to his mind, was locked in his own breast. Now with the help of her speech, he would break the subject to her.

"Dearest," said he, and his breath came quick and short, and as he spoke he gathered both her hands into his, and clasped them tightly: "Beatrice, shall we cut the Gordian knot of our difficulties as Romeo and Juliet cut theirs?"

But for the agitation of his manner, but for the eagerness in his face, Beatrice might have been at a loss to comprehend his speech; with those guides she saw his meaning, and a flush sprang to her cheek while she gave him a look of indignation. Not a word did she utter for a minute or two, but at last she answered him, speaking them in a sad, quiet tone of voice.

"If we did," said she, "our end might not be as tragical as theirs, but it would be not less disastrous."

"You mean that you will brave nothing for me? I think if you loved me, Beatrice," said he, bitterly, "you would be willing to dare this for my sake."

"If I loved you less, I might be more willing to do what you desire; that I love you so much is reason that I should refuse. Shall I be a cause of evil to you?" she asked, turning round her noble young face to him, and looking straight into his dark clouded eyes. "Shall I be a cause of evil to you? I should bring you no good: no blessing. None ever yet attended disobedience."

"The truth is," said he, to quicken her, using the taunt that would tell most with a woman of her nature, "you will venture nothing, dare nothing."

"I will dare anything save wrong."

"Wrong! there would be no wrong in it. Far from its being wrong, it would do good. See the terms on which my uncle and your father are! It is quite shocking. I heard Mrs. Mildmay talking of it only to-night, that it was a scandal to a civilized community, and she was right. Well! once we were married, they'd be bound to come together, and there would be an end to the quarrel. So you see we should be actually doing good. Now, what can you say?" cried he, triumphantly.

"I cannot answer that," said she; "but I know it would be wrong. Oh, Herbert!" she pleaded, turning to him with clasped hands, her bosom rising and falling with her excess of emotion—Lennox remembered afterwards noting the glitter of the diamonds in the moonlight, as they quivered with the heaving of her throat—"Oh! Herbert, have patience; we must wait and hope for help."

"You do not know how hard the waiting is for me," he cried.

"I know how hard it is for myself," whispered Beatrice, as she laid her soft cheek caressingly upon his arm. Thereupon the young man gathered her to himself, murmuring fondest words, and Beatrice knew herself to be forgiven. She felt that they were at peace, that the contest was over, and victory remained with her and the right: but how long would it be before the battle would have to be fought over again; and how soon would her strength be spent?

Before the pair of lovers had stood there much longer taking cold, an interruption came in unromantic form.

The cool night air carried up a peculiar perfume.

"Smoke!" cried Herbert. "I thought once before that I smelt a cigar. By Jove! if any fellow is smoking there, he may have heard our conversation."

"At all events it is time we went within," answered Beatrice; and slipping from him, she stepped back into the room.

"I shall go and look if there is anybody down below. It is not a pleasant idea," said Lennox.

Part of the terrace lay in shadow, but the spark of the cigar formed a beacon that led Lennox straight to the object of his search.

"Hallo! Herbert, is that you?" said the voice of his uncle. "Have you come out like me for a quiet smoke?"

Nothing in his words to indicate whether or not he had heard Beatrice and himself talking: but he stood with his back propped against one of the pillars which supported the balcony, and much of their conversation might in his position have reached his ears.

Mr. Lennox was an inveterate smoker, and he continued now to pull steadily at his cigar, but he rose erect and commenced to saunter towards the house. As he reached the door he threw away the end, and made another suggestion to his silent nephew.

"Don't you think it is time that we were making our way homewards? Have you not had about enough of this?"

"As you like, uncle," answered Herbert, as they entered; and he pulled out his watch to see the hour by a lamp at the foot of the staircase. "It's twelve o'clock; five minutes past, in fact."

As Herbert spoke, fresh strains of music floated towards them. The morning was come, and many voices were raised in singing a carol to usher in Christmas Day.

"God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day;
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray."

The two men stood and listened in silence: the young man from a feeling of reverence; the elder one's mind busy with past scenes. Ah! how many memories the old words brought before him! They waited in complete stillness to the very end.

"Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood,
Each other now embrace;
The holy tide of Christmas
All other doth deface.
Oh! tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy."

Shortly after, their carriage came round and they got home; but for some reason Mr. Lennox could not sleep when he had retired. In vain he changed his position, in vain he made himself comfortable, slumber would not visit his eyelids. Perhaps it was the fault of the memories awakened by the season and the ancient carol; perhaps it was the disturbing influence of uneasy thoughts of Herbert; but whatever the cause of the restlessness, the result was certain, Mr. Lennox could not get to sleep. And there and then, in the quiet of the night season, conscience awakened and rebuked him for his quarrel with his neighbour. True, that neighbour had robbed him of a bit of land, which neither of them wanted, but was it cause enough for this bitter and lasting enmity? But, argued his worse

self, it is not my place more than his to bridge the gulf; let him come and sue for peace.

And then memory told him that his neighbour had once held out the olive-branch; and how had he received the token? By a cutting insult before the whole bench of magistrates, all their peers in the county. Ah! well, when next he came with overtures of peace, he—he would see if he could not generously pardon him. Reflecting thus, his troublesome conscience was at length lulled, and he fell into an uneasy slumber; but his dreams were worse than his waking thoughts.

First, he was upon a snow-clad moor, wide and bare, nothing to break the desolate expanse, save where here and there a bush rose darkly against the white surface. In advance of him on the trackless waste was Herbert, and with him Beatrice Thorneycroft. The girl was in her ball dress, now all torn and soiled, and in their headlong course she stumbled and fell repeatedly; yet Herbert never loosened his grasp, or paused, but ever dragged her on faster and faster. The snow grew deeper; and Mr. Lennox in pursuit called to them to stop, as they neared a dangerous chasm: but the pair only plunged on the more wildly, until at last with a shriek they disappeared over the brink of the precipice.

Hot and trembling from the agony of his vision, Mr. Lennox awoke. When he had in a measure recovered himself, he struck a light to see the time, and finding it only six o'clock, he lay still; and presently he slept again. And again he dreamed. This time he stood upon a bleak ocean-shore, and Herbert and Beatrice were putting to sea in a ruined old boat. He implored them to desist from their purpose; but they only pulled the harder from the land. Each grasped an oar, and the boat was sent rushing through the waves, which rose higher and higher. Heavens! if they kept that course they must strike a reef of sunken rocks, and the rotten old craft fall asunder like tinder. In his terror he shrieked aloud to them. Too late! the boat bounded up once like a living thing; and, like living creatures of prey, the waves leaped around her, and a moment after, with her precious freight, she was swallowed up in the dark abysses of the sea.

The anguish of his vision again awoke Mr. Lennox, and he resolved to sleep no more. But he could not so easily shake off the strange chill which continued to rest upon his spirit. At length, however, his servant brought in his hot water, and he arose and dressed; and by the time breakfast was over, he was himself once more, proud and calm. Bah! he was not to be frightened by a bad dream. In which mind, scorning himself and his weakness in having permitted such phantoms of the night to pursue and unman him, he went to church, marching up to his pew with his stately grey head borne higher than usual. Glancing at his handsome nephew, the idol of his heart, who in his turn was intent upon intercepting Beatrice's

blue eyes when they should look up from her book; glancing at the country people; glancing at the familiar old walls of the edifice, broken with many a tablet and monument to the memory of dead and gone Lennoxes, the proud old man sat there, staid, respectable, immovable. Presently, upon his expectant ears fell the ancient Christmas story; and the narrative of the humble birth and the helpless infancy of the King of Heaven went home to his heart and pleaded with his pride, as nought else could have done. The Babe of Bethlehem bowed that rigid spirit and conquered, where all other influences had failed.

And now the service was over, and the congregation began to stream forth; first, the rustic population, with much stamping of nailed boots and greeting in the porch; then Mr. Thorneycroft and his daughter made their way down to their carriage. The latter, looking very lovely in her furs and red cloak, had just been put safely into the carriage; and her father was about to follow her, when he heard a voice behind him.

"Thorneycroft, old friend, a merry Christmas to you!"

Mr. Thorneycroft wheeled round, then backed a step or two. The tones were those of his old enemy; the person who stood there was his foe himself; and Mr. Thorneycroft could not have been more astounded if one of the stone effigies of the Lennoxes had got off its uncomfortable couch in the church, and followed him down the path.

"Why! what!" he exclaimed, staring in a species of stupefaction. Then he met the glance of Guy Lennox's eyes, and saw his outstretched hand; and at length he recovered his self-possession.

"A merry Christmas to you, and a thousand of them!" he cried, seizing Mr. Lennox's hand, and wringing it until the tears stood in its owner's eyes with emotion, or with pain. "This is kind of you, Lennox; kind of you," was all poor warm-hearted Mr. Thorneycroft could get out for a minute or two.

Miss Beatrice put her pretty head out to learn what was going on.

"My dear; I am going to walk a short distance with Mr. Lennox," said her father, adding to the coachman, "Drive on slowly, and wait for me at the Cross Roads."

"I will see Miss Thorneycroft safe so far," Herbert struck in with what he considered admirable presence of mind; saying which he jumped into the carriage, and took his place beside Beatrice. But even the young lovers could not complain that it was a very short time that they had had together, when Mr. Lennox and Mr. Thorneycroft at length appeared sauntering up.

"You'll dine with us to-night?" said Mr. Thorneycroft.

"What do you say, Herbert?" asked his uncle.

"With a great deal of pleasure, so far as I am concerned," answered the young man, and his face bore witness to the sincerity of the sentiment.

"Then you must consider yourselves engaged to us for New Year's Day," said Mr. Lennox.

"Certainly, we'll dine together," said Mr. Thorneycroft, his ruddy face beaming with goodwill. And the young lovers looked as though they would not have objected to the same arrangement for all the intermediate evenings.

But they had very little further trial to undergo; for, when next May came round, the old gateway, which holly-wreathed had witnessed the reconciliation, was garlanded with flowers for an important wedding that all the countryside flocked to see; and in due time there came stepping forth a happy bride and bridegroom.

HIDDEN.

Without, the snow lay white and cold:
Within, half hidden by the fold
Of crimson curtains, fringed with gold,
Hung, as in bygone ages old,
The mistletoe's white berry.
And, chatting in the quiet there,
Where gleamed the firelight on their hair,
Three maidens, fairest of the fair,
Laughed on, without a thought of care—
All blithe and merry.

And I, from out my hiding place,
Gazed on each fair and blushing face,
And on the drooping folds of lace
Which round their shoulders fell with grace
So lightly.
"Last night," spake low my cousin May,
"I dreamed I walked a lonely way,
Where all in darkness round me lay;
But o'er a holly gleamed a ray
Most brightly.

"The berries shone a coral red,
'Mid the green leaves above my head;
'O give to me a spray,' I said.
A voice spoke softly, 'He you'll wed
Shall give you holly truly.'"
"Oh then," said Flo, "we all know well,"
As at their glance May's blue eyes fell,
"It was your lover, Charlie Bell,
Who brought that spray you guard so well,
And treasure duly.

"And I," said Flo, with saucy glee,
"I lay as quiet as could be
And dreamed that one from o'er the sea
Had sent a letter here for me
This Christmas day.
And I can guard my treasure too,"
She said, and from her bosom drew
A letter, and a ribbon blue:
"I knew my Harry would be true,
Though far away."

"*I* dreamed," said Chrystobel, "last night
Of dancing, flickering fire-light,
That shone where partly hid from sight
'Mid crimson folds, hung berries white
And leaves of pallid green.
And then, as now, I stood the same,
And he, from out the gloom he came,
And breathing soft and low my name,
He kissed me, where the yellow flame
Fell on the berries' sheen."

Then May and Flo they laughing fled:
"We leave you till *he* come," they said.
She stood a glory, round her head,
And on her cheeks a rose-flush red,
Both beautiful and sweet.
And I, as she had dreamed last night,
Stepped from the gloom into the light
And kissed her, with a deep delight,
Beneath those mystic berries white,
For lovers true most meet.

A YOUNG SAILOR'S STORY.

THREE years ago I shipped on board the *Niger*, Captain Phillips. Our voyage was to Hilo, Sandwich Islands, and back to Paget Sound, whence we sailed. The captain, officers, and crew were, when I joined, all Americans and West Indiamen; but as another hand was wanted besides myself, I persuaded Jack Chester, an Englishman with whom I had become friendly, to fill up the vacancy. Jack was a fine-looking fellow, a jovial companion, and had lots of information, which he knew how to use; but although he dressed and talked like a sailor, he had not been long on board ship before it became plain that he had not been brought up a salt.

Our captain was a Tartar and no mistake; and as he had the eye of a hawk, no fault committed by man or boy escaped him. This was especially unfortunate for my English shipmate. He had shipped on able-seaman's wages; but his deficiencies were so many and glaring, that our captain, who seemed to watch his movements more carefully than those of the rest of the crew, often inflicted upon him punishments painful to witness. I had a strong attachment to Chester, and stood his friend whenever I could, by taking some of his duties along with my own; but I was not always at hand to help him, so he fell oftener than others beneath the captain's displeasure.

One night, when I was at the wheel, the wind rose into a gale. The captain came on deck and set all hands to reef the topsails. The men were manning the halyards to hoist away, when poor Chester, instead of letting go the reef tackle, let go the weather fore-topsail brace, and away went the yard fore and aft. By luffing up smartly, however, we managed to get it checked without carrying anything away. But Captain Phillips, frothing at the mouth, swore he would tan the foolish lubber's hide who had done so clumsy a thing. Saying which, he rushed at Chester with a piece of ratline, which he brought down upon his neck and shoulders, giving them a fearful cut. He was in the act of raising it again, all hands looking on in silence, when a voice from aloft roared out, "Hold your hand!"

The voice was wonderfully loud and clear, seemingly coming from the maintop. The captain fell back, and looking up cried, in great rage: "Aloft there!"

"Halloa!" was the answer back.

"Come down upon the deck," was the captain's imperious order.

"Come up here and see how you will like it," was the contemptuous response.

"Come down, I say, upon the deck," foamed the captain.

"Come up and fetch me," returned the voice from aloft.

"Who is up there, Mr. Rassom?" cried the captain, appealing to the first officer.

"No one, sir," was the reply, "as far as I can see. All seem present on deck."

The captain's rage was now terrible to witness. "All *seem* present, Mr. Rassom? what do you mean by that, sir? I ask you again, who is up there?"

"No one known to me, sir," returned the mate. "All *are* present. All are on deck, in sight."

Such was the case. But the second mate, without awaiting orders, sprang up the rigging and looked over the top-rim, then made the circuit of it, looking all round the masthead, and then reported himself alone.

"Then the ship must be haunted!" cried the chief mate.

The captain hereupon dropped the rope's-end which he had held in his hand and went below. It was evident that he was strangely affected by what had occurred. And so my fellow-countryman escaped further punishment that night.

But in a few days our skipper had forgotten his fears, and looking out for another object upon whom to vent his spleen, I had the ill-fortune to feel his wrath. He ordered me to make a knot in the end of an old fagged rope to be used for a lashing. In a little while I returned, saying that I had made the best job I could of a rope which was quite fagged out.

"Well," said he, "if that's your best, you are as much of a lubber as your friend Chester. But I'll dock you both to ordinary seaman's wages." I tried to show him that the rope was too much worn to make a neat piece of work of it. "Indeed," I said, "it is sadly fagged."

"Fagged is it?" cried he scornfully; "then I'll finish it over your lubberly back."

"No you won't," roared out a voice from behind the longboat. The captain rushed in the direction of the sound, but he failed to discover the speaker.

"Who was that?" he cried in a storm of wrath, adding: "Let me know who it is, and I'll thrash him within an inch of his life."

"Will you? hah! hah! hah!" was the mocking reply, dropping seemingly from the maintop.

It was broad daylight when this took place, so everyone could see that there was no one up there. I was as much startled and mystified by the occurrence as was the captain; but neither he nor I, nor any of the crew to whom he appealed, could throw light thereon. But, whoever or whatever uttered the words, my purpose was served, as was Chester's on a previous occasion. The irate captain went below filled more with fear than rage, throwing behind him, as he stepped upon the cabin-ladder, the rope's-end which had so vexed him.

Sailors in general are superstitious beings. Whatever cannot be

easily made out or accounted for on natural principles is laid to the account of the supernatural. Our captain was no better in this respect than his crew, for he was as illiterate as they, except in the matter of navigation, and as rough and untutored. He evidently believed that his ship was haunted, and that a spirit from the vasty deep had a mind to torment him by its interferences. His fears were increased not many days after. On retiring to rest, at the end of his evening's watch, his slumbers were disturbed by a loud and fearful cry which seemed to enter the cabin by the side-light, which was left open for ventilation. The cry was heard by the second officer, who was on the quarter-deck, and by Chester, who was at the wheel; neither of whom could throw light upon the incident to the captain, who had rushed on to the deck in a state of terror, and demanded in vain for the production of the offender.

From that day it was clear to us all that Captain Phillips was tormented by apprehensions of coming disaster. An idea was fixed in his mind that his ship was visited by a spirit from the invisible world, who preferred to make itself heard rather than seen. And this idea was strengthened by the fact that when he was on deck, and became angry at the conduct of any of the men; especially when his anger was made manifest in oaths and blows; the unseen but ever-vigilant visitor from afar would—perched apparently on the top of the mainmast—utter the insolent laugh or the dolorous warning. On these occasions the poor man would rush off to his cabin, with blanched cheek and tottering limb, and there abide until the gale in his moral sensibilities should subside. That it was angry with no one else but the captain was clear, from the fact that it never took notice of the conduct of any other person. The mate or the boatswain might act as they liked, or the men might jibe and chaff each other; no matter—the voice was not heard—neither laugh nor moan fell upon our ears. But most of those who lived in the forecastle were far from being happy, many of them shared the fears of the skipper; and I saw that they would much rather have braved his wrath than be tormented as they were by the "voices of the night" or the "day." Myself and Chester were exceptions. What his opinion of the matter was he would not say: he met all my questions by adroit evasions. As for myself, I had no explanation to give, neither had I any fear, for I ate, slept, and worked as well as before.

Thus matters went on until we were within two days' sail of the Islands. All the while our poor captain had been kept from tyranny by his fears of the voice; but now, exasperated by some fault in seamanship on the part of Chester, and being the worse for liquor, he hurled a belaying-pin at him, which struck him on the head. Clapping both hands thereon, with a yell he rushed into the forecastle. It was evident the skipper expected to hear the voice, for he looked nervously aloft; but when all was silent in that direction, his courage returned, and he desired the second officer to call

Chester back to the deck. Getting no answer to his call, the mate went below, when he found the poor fellow delirious. Returning to the deck, he reported him to be in a dangerous condition.

This filled the captain with fear. He ordered that every attention should be paid him, which was done. That night it became necessary to have all hands on deck to reef, and while we were on the yards an awful cry, like that of a maniac, arose from the bows of the vessel, and next moment several of us saw a human form on the rail near the fore-swifter, and then a loud splash was heard in the water under our lee.

The captain and chief officers who were on deck rushed to the side. A hat was seen for a moment bobbing on the crest of a wave; the maniacal scream was repeated, when Captain Phillips, himself uttering a cry, fell senseless on the deck. The mate then hailed us who were on the topsail yard—"Come down from aloft! clear away the small boat!" We thought he was as near beside himself as was the captain: and so he was for the moment, for by the time we had gained the deck he was ready to countermand the order. Everything was awful beyond expression, the wind and the water were raging wild; it was impossible for a small boat to live in so rough a sea; so, making a virtue of necessity, the search for the poor maddened fellow was abandoned, amid vows of vengeance against the captain and tears for our lost messmate.

Forty-eight hours after this we entered the port of Hilo. A vast change had come over the crew. The captain, knowing their peculiarities, had supplied them with money and copious libations of whiskey; so, instead of reporting him to the Consul, as they had declared they would, they were ready to shout his praises all day long. In this, however, I did not agree; but unable to bring the tyrant to justice single-handed, I resolved to quit the *Niger*.

I did so. After hiding in the woods several days, I was caught and brought back to the ship. As my adventures as a fugitive are not essential to the unfolding of my story, I pass them by, and take up the thread of my narrative.

We set sail on our return voyage. Captain Phillips was an altered man. He abstained from spirits, he controlled his temper, and this, with the addition of a fine steady breeze, made our lives on board happy. But, alas! we were doomed to a sad ending-up of the voyage. Keeping too near the land, and a squall laying hold on the ship, we were driven on a lee-shore. It was just after midnight when we struck, and the darkness was terrible. The shock aroused me from my slumbers, and leaping out of my hammock, I ran on deck. I could see nothing save the wild waters racing over the deck. I cried out to my shipmates, but got no answer. It was not possible to reach the after part of the vessel where the life-belts were kept, so, acting on the impulse of the moment, I leapt into the sea. Catching

hold of a friendly rock, I was saved. Daylight came after a weary waiting. The first thing I saw was the dead body of poor Captain Phillips, and not far from it that of our Chinese cook. The rest were saved.

We made our way to Portland, where we were paid off. Thence I proceeded to San Francisco. I had often asked myself whence came those strange voices and fearful words, which had so alarmed our captain and put most of the crew in terror, and had so opportunely on one occasion saved me from the vengeance of the captain. But it was beyond my power to answer the enquiry, neither could the mate nor any of the survivors throw light thereupon. Had we known what ventriloquism was, we might have had therein a solution of the mystery ; but I had never heard an adept in that art, neither had any of my shipmates, otherwise I judged such fact would have been mentioned and the voices accounted for on that ground. Poor Chester, when with us our most intelligent shipmate, seemed to be as much in the dark as the rest of us, but he was not in the least put out of the way by the occurrences, though he foreshowed in others the supernatural idea.

Strolling along the streets of San Francisco one night, about a year after the wreck, ready for anything in the way of amusement that might turn up, my eye caught a large poster which announced the wonderful doings of Professor Meredith—"the unrivalled and world-renowned ventriloquist."

"This," thought I, "shall be the source of my evening's enjoyment." Turning my face in the direction of the "Hall of Science and Emporium of Amusement," I was soon seated in a snug corner of the body of the building, and was not long in being carried away by the wonderful sayings and doings of the Professor. At last he told us that he would hold an imaginary conversation with a person up the chimney. He did so. When in the midst of a dialogue, the person up the flue gave a derisive "hah, hah, hah!" I was startled. I sprang from my seat. "Surely," said I, half aloud, "that is the voice, and tone, and words which more than once came from the maintop of the *Niger*." And while I was staring at the Professor, with eyes ready to leap out of their sockets, he came to the front of the stage to perform his part. Then, in spite of his flowing beard and other decorations, I saw in Professor Meredith the identical Jack Chester, who, over twelve months before, was believed to have leaped in a fit of madness into the sea, and was drowned.

"Chester!" I cried out, in my excitement.

"Sit down!" cried one; "put him out," said some others. In the meanwhile I had come to myself, and resumed my seat, but not before I had got from the Professor a sign of recognition.

When the performance was over, my old shipmate, for it was he, beckoned me to him, and taking me to his private room, he grasped my hand in all the fervency of ardent friendship. "Sit down, Henry,

my boy," he said, "and you shall have a solution of the mystery which hangs over me and the past."

"How came you to be saved from a watery grave on that awful night when you plunged into the raging sea?" I impatiently asked.

"I did not jump overboard," replied Chester, laughing; "neither was I any less sane than I am at this moment. The entire affair was a trick of my own invention to frighten the captain, and then get away from his clutches. My madness was a sham, and the man overboard was simply a bundle of old togs, topped by my old hat, which I had just put together. The moment I pitched them over the rail I slipped down into the fore-peak, where I lay hid until the night after the ship entered the port, when I stole out and went on shore. I had taken care to lay up plenty of junk, and I managed to avoid detection until the *Niger* sailed. The cries which you heard from the main-top, from behind the long-boat, and in the cabin I need not now explain."

"No," said I, "all is made clear by the doings of this night."

"Exactly so," said he. And then he continued—"I had performed as a ventriloquist in most large cities and towns in Europe before you knew me; but becoming somewhat restless in my habits, and having squandered all my earnings, in a fit of recklessness I took to the sea, and in the capacity of a sailor found my way to Paget Sound. But I had not in me the stuff of which sailors are made, so after my adventures on board the *Niger* I went back to my old profession, in which I have done well. My wild oats are all sown, I hope, and having learnt wisdom by bitter experience, I shall stick to that line of life for which I have capacity; a better thing than splicing old ropes, or taking in topsail reefs on a blowing night."

"I should think so," I said. "But you nearly killed the captain with fright, whilst you caused us many a heartache at your supposed loss."

"For the latter I am very sorry," returned Chester. "But I cannot say that I pitied the captain. His cruelty to me was terrible, and he would possibly have ended by killing me, but for my fortunate gift of ventriloquism. All's well that ends well."

"True," I returned. "And I rejoice that you are alive to say so. You kept your secret famously, for neither Captain Phillips nor any of his crew ever suspected that incapable Jack Chester was the ghost that haunted the *Niger*."

HOW ANNA CAROLLA BECAME FAMOUS.

A GROUP of girls stood at the stage door of the Grand Opera House in Vienna, talking or exchanging words with the other employés who passed in, keeping the while a sharp look out for the manager. One of these chorus singers, a young and beautiful Italian girl, standing just within the extreme entrance, with her mantle wrapped close about her throat, suddenly remarked:

"We must sing our best to-night, for the Emperor is coming."

"Is he? how do you know? who told you, Anna Carolla?"

"One of the band," answered Anna Carolla, quietly. "Carl Rosenfeldt. There he comes with his violin."

With some others of the opera band there approached a tall, handsome young Hungarian, who paused to answer the girls' eager inquiry. "Had he said the Emperor was coming?"

"Yes; the Imperial Guards have just passed by to take up their place at the grand entrance. The house will be crowded."

Then passing inside, he stooped to whisper to Anna Carolla, with a smile in his deep blue eyes. "Anna, I lead the violins to-night—Stendgal is ill."

She put her hand in his, with the sweet, perfect trust of one who knows she is loved.

"I am sorry for him; but for you, Carl, my heart must be glad."

"Here they come, together!" cried a girl outside. "The manager and chef d'orchestre. Away!"

The new leader of the band hurried away as the chorus trooped in, and Anna Carolla followed them into their dressing-room. There she soon donned her stage dress, and slipped away to watch the house filling, and, above all, to hear every note of the exquisite overture to "Oberon."

How fast every place was filling from floor to gallery! The auditorium was one blaze of splendour; and as she gazed, the poor, friendless chorus singer: whose dramatic talent and splendid voice ought, if she had only the fortune to get the first lift, to place her high in the lyric stage: wondered sadly if such chance would ever come to her; if not, Carl's father would never consent to their marriage. And now the whole house rose as the Emperor entered his box, splendidly dressed, glittering with jewels of rarest value, which flashed a thousand rays as he bowed right and left with his usual courteous grace. Then the band struck up the overture, and with the last bar the curtain drew up.

Flitting here and there during the performance, with eyes and ears for everything, the manager noticed the Imperial visitor indicating to a gentleman beside him someone in the chorus. It was Anna

Carolla, whose beauty had attracted his eye, whose rich voice his ear had caught above and through all the others.

The first act went splendidly, and the second act soon commenced; but Fate had decreed that it should never be played out that night. Half way through, as the manager, pleased, and complacent, was quietly standing back in one of the wings, he suddenly felt his arm grasped, and turned sharply to see Anna Carolla's lovely face, so full of determination and character, at his side.

"Hush," she said, very low and quietly, "make no exclamations, but go and see to it before it gains or is discovered. The theatre is on fire somewhere back of the greenroom. The company can leave by the stage door. Go."

"But, child, if there is the least hint of alarm, look at that house. They will be crushed to death in their terror and crowding to get out."

"Listen," said the Italian, in the same calm, self-contained manner. "Send the call-boy to tell the doorkeeper to order each one as they pass out to depart quickly. I will clear the house quietly."

"You do *that!*"

"Yes: here is the boy; send him, and clear out the company; I will do my part."

The manager blindly obeyed the strong will and steady purpose of the master-mind: as people in emergency generally do, whatever their relative positions in the world.

Anna Carolla passed on to the stage; and advancing at once to the footlights, stood for one moment, her tall, commanding form and beautiful head drawn erect, unflinchingly facing that crowd, meeting full even the astonished gaze of the Emperor himself, and the wondering look of her lover in the orchestra below her.

Then she said, in a voice not loud, but clear as a bell, with cool steady authority in every measured accent:

"I am here by the manager's orders. His Imperial Majesty has been robbed to-night of a rare diamond, and the thief is in the house. Everyone," and the speaker's dark eyes swept the audience from gallery to pit, "is at once to withdraw quietly, and in order; anyone attempting to remain will be immediately arrested. The band will also retire at once." Even as she spoke, her ear, painfully strung for the sound, could hear the warm hum of flames from the back; but unmoved she stepped back, swept a deep obeisance to the audience and Emperor, and the curtain fell.

The Emperor instantly left his box, whispering to the gentleman to whom he had before pointed out Anna Carolla: "There is something behind all this. I am not robbed. Send Colonel Bergmann round to summon the manager to our carriage door."

Meanwhile, the vast crowd filtered rapidly, in quiet order and in safety out, only learning at the door, as they were hurried away, the awful death by fire or crushing from which the brave and quick-

witted girl had saved them. The last few to leave the auditorium smelt the fire and heard the crackling of flames, and hurried wildly, spreading the alarm. But the terrible cry of fire came too late to do mischief, and once outside, the police and soldiery, under the cool directions of the Emperor himself, kept order. And though the flames mounted at first, Anna's timely discovery, and the energetic measures taken, forced the fire under. In less than an hour and a half it was completely drenched out, and the mutilated Opera House left in charge of the police.

Then, and not till then, did the Emperor dismount from the horse he had used and return to his carriage. As he did so, he paused suddenly.

"Bergmann, see! there goes that Italian girl herself, leaning on the arm of the young fellow who led the band so splendidly to-night. Go see who and what they are." Colonel Bergmann departed to obey the order, and the Emperor drove off.

The next day the whole story was in the government organ, with an intimation, "inspired" of course from that quarter, that His Imperial Majesty had graciously caused inquiries to be made about the young chorus singer.

A few days later, old Herr Rosenfeldt received an official intimation that his gifted son Carl, and his fiancée, Anna Carolla, were both under Imperial protection, and their marriage was desired to take place as immediately as possible, the Emperor dowering the bride. The manager also received a similar intimation through Colonel Bergmann, that his late chorus singer was to be brought forward, and advertised for the reopening of the opera as Madame Carolla-Rosenfeldt.

Once more the élite of gay Vienna crowded the Opera House to witness the début of the new singer, as Agata in "Der Freischütz." The moment she came on she was received with a furore which might well make Carl Rosenfeldt proud of his beautiful young wife; and if for Royalty was her grateful glance and sweeping salute, for him was the smile in the soft dark eyes that met his for one second.

When the curtain fell, the new star was called for and showered with bouquets from many a distinguished hand: but from the Imperial box was flung one in which lay nestled a costly bracelet, in the centre of which blazed a diamond of rare value and beauty.

"That fire has made our fortune, Carl," his young wife said, smiling, as they drove home.

"Nay, Anna, your own courage and quickness," answered Carl Rosenfeldt. "That was a diamond rarer than the Imperial gift."

And he was right.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

THE FATE OF THE FOSBROOKES.

By Mrs. G. Linnæus Banks.

THOUGH possessed of no actual patent of nobility, the Fosbrookes of Fosbrooke Manor held their heads as high, and were as proud of their long pedigree, as any baronet in the county. And with good cause; so many intermarriages with right noble dames were emblazoned on that roll, so broad were the acres over which the Squire held manorial and territorial sway, so fine a specimen of Tudor architecture was his grand old mansion, that the lord of the manor it represented might well be pardoned if he boasted the blue blood which had come to him through successive maternal veins, and forgot that he held no other lordship.

The Fosbrookes of Fosbrooke, however, were not given to boasting. They had been squires of the land for so many generations that their position was assured, and needed no trumpet-tongue to proclaim it. I am myself a Fosbrooke, and perhaps inherit the old leaven, if I inherit nothing more.

For it happens, I am but the descendant of a degenerate and disowned Fosbrooke, who struck a deadly blow at the family pride, and my name—neither Rupert nor Reginald, but blunt, plain John, Barrister-at-Law—may be found on the lintels of a door in the Inner Temple: and three months ago Fosbrooke Manor was known to me only through tradition.

My grandfather's grandfather, so I have been told, was the Squire's second son, and destined for the army in accordance with established precedent. But he, Rupert, had no mind to gird a warrior's sword upon his thigh. He had watched the family portraits grow warm and life-like under the hand of Gainsborough; had gone with the artist into the woods and terraced gardens, in quest of fitting backgrounds; and, lingering by his side, the longing grew within himself to be a painter, and reproduce on the lifeless canvas the loveliness of life and nature. Unknown to Squire or Dame, their son sketched by Gainsborough's side; and he, proud of his art, fostered the youth's enthusiasm, all unwitting of mischief.

Thus it chanced that when the rising painter returned to the metropolis, after a prolonged stay in the ancient Manor House, he left behind a pupil longing to emulate his master, as well as a group of pictures in the oaken gallery.

Then it was discovered that Rupert dabbled in pigments; but so long as he only handled his brush for amusement, he might copy the old pictures on the walls, group together cottage children, or case a groom in armour from the staircase, and transfer to the panels of his

chamber his crude imaginings of art, with no further token of disapprobation than the contemptuous laughter of his father and brother, who regarded a fox's brush as a trophy, but a painter's as the mere tool of a craftsman. Yet the very taunts and sarcasms which followed the young laggard in the hunting-field, the unsportsmanlike shot in woods or stubble, drove him for refuge to the solitude of his own chamber, and for solace to the art contemned by those around him.

But not until Rupert declined to be a soldier did opposition culminate and wrath grow fierce. In vain did the good mother plead with son and sire; in vain did Reginald urge his brother to renounce his degrading pursuit as a slur on their ancient lineage and escutcheon, holding up the army as the only outlet for a Fosbrooke.

Rupert was as persistent as his elder brother, as resolute as his father was vehement; all argumentation ending with the same resolve: "I will *not* lay down my paint brush for a sword."

"Then by heaven I'll make a bonfire of your painting rattletraps! No son of mine shall spend his days in daubing canvas to disgrace us all!" cried the old Squire in his wrath.

Presently there was a great blaze in the courtyard, that seemed to flame again in the dark eyes of Rupert, who stood in the doorway with knitted brows and folded arms, a fire kindling in his heart as all his treasures went to feed the holocaust.

His lip curled. "Ay, burn them, an' you will; I shall be a painter notwithstanding."

"You paint no more in Fosbrooke Manor, Master Rupert," replied his father, with decision. "There is your commission, take it or leave it. But if you leave it you quit Fosbrooke at once and for ever. See then if brush or sword be best to fight your way with."

"You may cast the commission among the burning rattletraps," retorted the young man proudly. "I'll none of it. You have kindled a fire to destroy, and it will die in ashes; but the fire of genius is unquenchable, and that creates."

"No weeping, madam," shouted the Squire, as Dame Fosbrooke's kerchief went to her tearful eyes. "Let him carry his genius elsewhere. He paints no more under this roof. And look you, sir," he called after Rupert, who was following his distressed mother, "if ever you put a living foot on this threshold whilst I'm above ground, I'll have you pitched out neck and crop, you ungrateful whelp."

Reginald stood apart, but made no sign of interposition. Rupert turned. "At your bidding, sir, I go. Fosbrooke Manor is now no place for me. But, living or dead, I shall come back to my home some day, and none shall say me nay when next I paint beneath its roof."

He sought his sorrowing mother, and clung to her embrace, but, proud and persistent as his kin, tore himself away. In half an hour he was on the road to London, with naught but what his steed could carry, and his mother's tearful blessing.

Squire Fosbrooke closed the chamber of his degenerate son, and the avenues of his heart. He made a will in which he utterly renounced him, and thenceforth woe betide the luckless wight who dared to speak of Rupert in his hearing.

He had been his favourite child, the son of his age—a posse of girls had come between Reginald and him—and the wrench made in a moment of anger set his heart-strings quivering for ever. But a Fosbrooke of Fosbrooke was never known to yield where the family honour was concerned, and silence as of the grave closed over Rupert's name within the shadow of the Manor. If ever a whisper reached the mother's ear that he had found a welcome in Gainsborough's studio, the whisper never had an echo from her lips. The Squire, once bluff and hearty, grew stern—the blow he had dealt at his boy had fallen on himself.

Nothing was heard of Rupert for many years. His sisters married and went their several ways to distant homes. Reginald alone was left. Then he took to himself a wife, and grandchildren ran in and out of the tapestried rooms with a pleasant patter on the oaken floors, and climbed the old Squire's knee, and won smiles from the sad-eyed grandmother, who sighed so heavily as she watched their childish gambols.

The seasons came and went. It was the tenth anniversary of the day on which a prejudiced father drove forth his son (as stubborn as himself) to shape a future in an untried world. Ten years since Rupert, with the double fire of genius and obstinacy in his eye, rode away down the long beech avenue without one backward glance at battlements or mullioned window to stir the deeper emotions of his soul and change his purpose.

Squire Fosbrooke and his heir had been out with the hounds since dawn. The London carrier's waggon creaked slowly along a by-lane to the back of the great house, and there surrendered a square, unwieldy, flat packing-case, over which conjecture wasted itself, until the white-haired dame, yielding less to the curiosity of her grandchildren and their mother, Lady Annabel, than to some unconquerable impulse within herself, gave orders for the forcing of the lid. Whatever lay within was covered by a thick cloth, on which was inscribed in bold characters :

"Rupert Fosbrooke's Addition to the Family Portraits."

The elder lady blanched to her very lips. With gesture rather than word she ordered the removal of the cover the while the children crowded round in wonderment, and Lady Annabel drew herself up disdainfully.

There, limned by no tyro, the discarded son of the house looked out from the canvas, older, manlier, nobler than of old, palette and brushes in hand, a fine boy's head before him on an easel; and by his side, with fingers lightly resting on his shoulder, a woman lovely as

a painter's dream. No need the written legend to declare that Rupert's wife and son were also there pourtrayed; or that his had been the artist hand.

"Rupert Fosbrooke, Maud his wife, and Rupert his son," read Reginald's eldest boy. "Why, grandmother, who are they?"

"Your uncle, and your aunt and cousin, child," sobbed the bereaved old lady in broken accents, whilst the servants drew respectfully apart and whispered beneath their breath. Lady Annabel plucked her children away, saying:

"Uncle and aunt, forsooth! They are neither kith nor kin of mine, boy. No common painter's doll-faced wife claims affinity with me!"

"Lady Annabel," said the elder, gathering up her form, "Rupert Fosbrooke is my dear son. I never disowned him. I will not disown the fair mate he has chosen. He would never stoop to one unworthy."

"Stoop! He had sunk to the portrait-painter's level ere he wedded his master's niece. I heard so much, madam, when I was last in town." So saying, Lady Annabel swept away to give her little ones a lesson in pride of birth, and obliterate, if possible, the pictured relatives from remembrance.

Lady Annabel was no favourite with the old servants, and dark-eyed Rupert had been.

Reverently they obeyed Dame Fosbrooke's behest, and carrying the picture into the long dining-room, set it upright against the tapestried wall by the side of the carved buffet.

As the Squire entered with a troop of hungry hunting friends, the picture caught his sight. For a few moments he stood gazing upon it with changing colour and breath that came and went; then, raising the whip he held, he struck at the figures fiercely, whilst he demanded hoarsely who had dared to brave him thus; and bade the servants haul it forth and burn it.

There was a bonfire blazing in the yard whilst the Squire and his friends supped, and Lady Annabel looked on with stern satisfaction from an upper window. But the packing-case alone was burned. The picture itself had been quietly smuggled into the closed chamber of the artist, and the good dame's secret was well kept: not for fee or reward, but for love of Barbara Fosbrooke and her youngest born.

Four years Dame Barbara kept that secret, along with others, in her heart; and then, lying on her death-bed, she broke the long silence and prayed that Rupert might be summoned to close her dying eyes.

It may be that the Squire was likewise wearying for a sight of his discarded son, and only lacked a pretext for his recall, for he was no longer obdurate. No doubt in his hidden soul he had long repented his hasty orders anent the picture, and blamed the too-obedient executants of his will. With barely a show of hesitation he consented

but Reginald and Lady Annabel, too crafty to demur, too proud to own a painter for a brother, threw obstacles in the way. "There was no clue to the vagabond's whereabouts."

From a locket worn concealed the feeble mother produced a tiny slip of paper. It held Rupert Fosbrooke's name and address. Here was an unlooked-for revelation. Annabel and Reginald exchanged glances.

"Ah! this implies correspondence. I presume, sir, you had no knowledge of any communication with my brother."

Once this would have been a spark on tow. It passed unheeded. All the Squire seemed to hear was his wife's appeal for haste; which his own voice seconded on her account, he said. Himself wrote a hurried letter of recall. At once Reginald became officiously active. He despatched a trusty messenger with the missive; so trusty, that he failed to return before the dame's ears were closed to any message he might bring.

Days went by. The white-haired Squire paced the corridors as anxiously expectant as the sick lady in the state bed. But the shifty or irritable answers of Reginald to her enquiries had aroused suspicion of treachery.

As the end drew nigh, she insisted on being carried to Rupert's chamber as the only chance of seeing the face of her lost son.

They thought her mind was wandering. Her meaning was clear enough to them all when her chair was placed in front of Rupert's picture, which yet bore the mark of the Squire's whip across its surface.

Not more eagerly did Barbara Fosbrooke's filming eyes trace the well-remembered lineaments of her banished son than did those of the old Squire, in whom affection had seemed so long dead; whilst Reginald and Annabel looked lost in amazement.

Life's fire relit in Barbara's wan features as she gazed: strength came to her anew. She kissed the Squire's brown hand as the other dashed from his eyes the fast-gathering tears; and then marking the scowl on Reginald's swart face as he slunk behind her chair, she lifted up her withered right hand, and extending it towards the picture, said impressively, in a voice which seemed to have gathered preternatural strength for the effort: "Rupert, my son, I call and thou dost not answer; I have longed for thee and thou dost not come. But thou shalt come, and thou and thine be masters of Fosbrooke when treachery has done its worst. I cannot die in my bed for lack of thy presence. But if there be treachery, let those who kept thee back answer it, for never shall a Fosbrooke die in his bed till the lost be recalled, and younger and elder join hands in love and friendship under the old roof-tree.

"And mark you, Reginald! my curse shall cling to him who dares destroy or disturb the picture I have preserved and cherished, the solace of my old age."

The flickering flame was spent. Barbara Fosbrooke fell back in her chair; and there, with the painted eyes of son, grandson, and daughter-in-law fixedly set upon her, she closed her own for ever.

He "would never set living foot in Fosbrooke Manor again" was the verbal message said to come from Rupert: and the old man winced as he listened, for the words were his own—never forgotten, it seemed, by either. He had no doubts of the messenger's fidelity; no thought of duplicity in his eldest-born. He accepted the answer as final; made no second attempt at reconciliation; never again mentioned Rupert's name. But from that hour a change fell upon him. All his old sports were neglected. Reginald might hunt and shoot, and fill the manor-house with roystering squires: he kept himself aloof, and would pace the long corridor between his own chamber and Rupert's by the hour together, not seldom turning into the unused room and lingering there alone with his regretful memories.

The servants said he was bewitched; and Reginald threatened to burn Rupert's picture in earnest, since it seemed like to turn his father's brain. And no doubt he would have carried his threat into execution but for an appalling incident which made the very room and all within a terror to him.

The only sport to which the Squire had clung was angling. It was quiet, and all noise and bluster had, as it were, died out of his life. Reginald strode in and about with heavy tread and resonant tones; *he* came and went as silently as the silver hairs fell from his thinning scalp; and sat in the shade of the alders and willows by the moat-side, heedless of the flight of time. At first his youngest grandson bore him constant company, and fished by his side with a willow-wand for a rod, prattling in boy fashion, with or without reply.

One memorable evening, as Lady Annabel was about to retire for the night, and the housekeeper bore a lamp before her along the corridor, they saw a pale light streaming under the closed door of Rupert's room: then there was a moan, and a fall.

Both women screamed; Reginald and a troop of servants rushed up the wide staircase. The latter hung back when told the cause of alarm, but Reginald dashed open the door and found, as he had expected, his father lying senseless on the floor.

But where was the light the pair had seen? There was only the lamp in the housekeeper's hand! And the servants whispered among themselves.

The Squire was raised and after a time revived. But he would give no explanation as to what had caused his swoon.

From that night, however, he would have no companion when he went to fish; sending his grandson back, kindly but peremptorily. He assigned no reason; and when the child cried, his lady mother encouraged him to disobey. His grandfather drove him back; but one day when so dismissed, he refused to depart, and then

the Squire gave up his sport altogether, warning the boy not to go near the moat alone.

The warning was disregarded. Before many days were gone, a slimy and dripping form was drawn from the moat, and Lady Annabel, wringing her hands, accused the old man of having murdered her boy. And the Squire turned mournfully away—but answered her never a word.

A month or more elapsed. Squire Fosbrooke came not to the breakfast-board. House and grounds were searched. He was found at last, lifeless, before the painting of his banished son.

Reginald, now lord of the manor, shut up the room once more, and kept the key. It was a needless precaution. From the time that Mistress Hope, the housekeeper, had confided to the steward that Rupert the painter had died in London the very night the old Squire was found senseless before his picture—from that time superstitious awe locked the door without a key. The old Squire, and he alone, would approach it night or day.

His death there confirmed the evil repute of the chamber, and Dame Fosbrooke's dying words were repeated under breath through house and village.

Mistress Hope having long rebelled against the rule of Lady Annabel, retired on the pension left by the Squire.

In less than a couple of years Reginald Fosbrooke was pitched clean over the neck of his hunter, and Lady Annabel was left a widow, to reign supreme at the Manor during the three years of the heir's minority.

Then the steward followed Mrs. Hope to London, and, though late in life, they made a match of it. They did more: they rescued Rupert Fosbrooke's wife and son from the poverty into which they were falling.

When the picture scheme of reconciliation had failed, Rupert grew bitter and angry with himself for having made the advance. But when, through Mrs. Hope, he heard of his mother's death, and the haughty answer Reginald's messenger had conveyed to the Manor as from him, grief and vengeance alternated in his breast, and in the turmoil he could not paint, and disappointed his patrons. A brain fever set in, and he died execrating his brother Reginald, and threatening to haunt him and his until the wrong was righted.

Maud, the unfortunate painter's widow, though too proud to appeal to her haughty sister-in-law, was not too proud to accept the home made for her and her son Rupert by the faithful steward and his wife; who, in their turn, felt it only an honour to devote to the service of a Fosbrooke the money they had saved in other Fosbrooke service. They lived to see the younger Rupert married, and impressed on him for his descendants this record of family history and estrangement, coupled with the doom hanging over the elder branch of the family; insisting that in some secret manner every fatality which

befell a Fosbrooke had been mysteriously foretold or previsioned within the haunted chamber of the discarded son.

So the story was handed down to me, with an addition of casualties by flood and field which had carried off the Fosbrookes, either in infancy or age, and which were only to be averted when the elder Fosbrooke extended the right hand of fellowship to the younger, and Rupert's heirs became masters of the Manor.

My grandfather believed this implicitly. As for myself, I was born in a sceptical and practical age, and have had to fight my own way so sturdily, I have had no leisure to waste on the ghostly traditions of by-gone ancestors in a remote manor-house.

So it might have been to the end of the chapter but for a combination of fortuitous circumstances which, to say the least, were remarkable.

II.

My friend Stretton, the solicitor, of Clement's Inn, to whom I owe whatever success I have made, came to my chambers in the Temple one summer day in unusual haste for him, and handed me a lengthy brief and a stiff retaining fee, saying: "There, run your eye over that! If you can talk the jury over to give our clients a verdict, your fortune's made!" and he gave me a quick tap on the shoulder.

I had taken up the paper languidly. "Myers *v.* Fosbrooke."

With a quickening thrill I ran my eye rapidly over the brief and soon made myself master of the contents.

The client I was called upon to defend was Charles Fosbrooke, of Fosbrooke Manor: our opponent, the plaintiff, a neighbouring landowner. The cause simply this.

Three of the Squire's children had been drowned by the upsetting of a small skiff on the moat. He at once vowed no more lives should be given up to its greedy waters, and set about its drainage. In so doing he unavoidably diverted the current of a small water-course known as the Fosse-brook, to the alleged detriment and damage of the plaintiff's property.

Had the plaintiff not been litigious the case might have been compromised at the outset, when the Squire offered compensation to Sir Joseph Myers.

By a strange coincidence, a letter lay open on my table before me, containing overtures from the opposite side, wherein my supposed hereditary antagonism to the Fosbrookes of the Manor was openly relied on as a reason why they should retain me as counsel, and I rejoice to hold their brief.

It is possible to have too low an estimate of human nature. Why should I, John Fosbrooke, exercise such gifts as I possessed in order to oppose my own distant kin, who had never done me a personal wrong?

I had just declined the plaintiff's brief, when Mr. Stretton put his head in at the door. I showed him the letter and my reply.

It remained for me to prove black was white, or, to suffer a non-suit. There is something in the old adage that "blood is thicker than water." I resolved to do my utmost for our client, in spite of dead-and-gone feuds. I threw myself into the case, ransacking legal records for points and precedents.

A day or two had elapsed. Leaving the Temple in the forenoon I encountered Stretton in the gateway, just as I was turning into Fleet Street. He caught me by the button-hole and invited me to luncheon with him. As I hesitated, a light basket-phæton containing a gentleman and lady, with a small page in dark livery behind, drove under Temple Bar and stopped in front of us.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Mr. Stretton, and almost before the words left his lips the page was at the horse's head, and the gentleman, whose eyes and hair were black as my own, and who struck me as a disagreeable likeness of myself—but not a bad-looking fellow on the whole—had jumped out, throwing the reins to the lady, as lovely a young brunette as it had been my fate to meet, with eyes as soft and melancholy as her companion's were eager and fiery.

With barely a word of apology to me, he drew the solicitor aside and began in a hurried voice I could not choose but hear.

"What's this your clerk tells me, Mr. Stretton? Do you know into what hands you have committed our case? This Mr. John Fosbrooke ——"

"Is a very rising young barrister—could not be in better hands," interrupted the lawyer imperturbably.

"He claims kinship with the Fosbrookes of Fosbrooke, sir. There is an old feud between his branch of the family and ours. You must withdraw the brief at any cost. He will ruin our cause. In my father's name I insist on the withdrawal of the brief!" This in answer to Mr. Stretton's visible protest.

I thought it quite time to interfere. As haughtily as himself I stepped forward. "Mr. Reginald Fosbrooke, I presume."

His bow said "Ay, and who on earth are you?"

"Your brief, sir, and my retaining fee, shall be in Mr. Stretton's office in less than twenty minutes. There is no need to withdraw the case—I throw it up." And I turned on my heel under the archway. I met my clerk on his way to dinner and sent him back flying for the offending brief and Stretton's cheque, which lay unchanged in my drawer. I had heard Stretton's remonstrance as I went, and the other's annoyed response.

I had barely taken three steps after my clerk, when a crash and a shriek called me back. Reginald Fosbrooke was lying stunned on the pavement, the page was scrambling to his feet, a bystander had caught the affrighted horse, the carriage-wheel was crashing in collision with a cab, and the lovely occupant was in imminent peril.

Darting forward, I managed to extricate the lady from the phæton before the plunging animal had made a total wreck of it.

She seemed as lifeless as the man on the ground. My clerk was back by this time. Shouting to him to bring a doctor to my chambers, and to Stretton to have his prostrate client conveyed thither, I hurried forward with the insensible girl in my strong arms, and placed her in my own chair. The couch had soon another occupant.

"This will be quieter than a shop," I whispered to Stretton, "and we can keep the crowd out *here*." He nodded a sort of dazed assent.

Before a doctor reached us my charge had revived. And then, her distress over her "dear brother," her "dear Reggy," was pitiable to witness.

I did my best to console her, and to assure her that her brother was not dead, only stunned, and would doubtless recover shortly; and, as she turned her liquid eyes in thanks on mine, I felt there was *one* Fosbrooke who could never be my enemy.

A couple of hours went by before Reginald Fosbrooke gave a sign of returning animation. The doctor had muttered something of concussion of the brain, and internal injury from the horse's hoof; insisted on quiet, forbade removal, and, aside to Stretton and me, suggested telegraphing to friends.

Barbara—I could almost have guessed her name had not the injured man murmured it, as she knelt beside him in sobbing agony—caught the suggestion and remarked simply—so simply that I am sure the doctor thought her wits were wandering—"There is no need: they will already know of this catastrophe at home."

They must have had a telegraph of their own, swifter than that of science! Surely enough, before the close of the afternoon Squire Fosbrooke—who must have been on the road before our message was despatched—stood by the side of his eldest son, and clasped my hand with grateful earnestness as that of a stranger, saying he was glad he had found him alive. He was a grave, dignified, but not haughty man, preternaturally old, and bent beneath the heavy burden of inexorable fate.

He and his daughter took possession of my chambers with many courteous apologies for turning them into a hospital; apparently unconscious that they were indebted to more than a chance namesake. Only the patient knew my antecedents; and when, at the close of the week, he recognised me as his involuntary entertainer he grew irritably impatient to be removed.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, his gentle sister shed tears, his father, Mr. Stretton, and myself remonstrated. The heir of Fosbrooke was wilful.

He was borne thence with the tenderest care; but barely had he crossed the threshold than violent hæmorrhage set in, and only a lifeless body was carried into the neighbouring hotel. A broken rib, displaced, had lacerated some internal organ.

Mourning did not arrest the law-suit. The Squire, ignorant of Reginald's prohibition, wrung my hand at parting, and said he was sure his cause was in good hands. I had gone with them to the station, possibly drawn thither by the grateful thanks in Barbara Fosbrooke's every tone and gesture. Then it occurred to the Squire that I might better understand how the case stood between him and Myers if I went over the grounds and tracked the Fosse-brook; and he asked me to follow them down in time for his poor boy's funeral.

I went back to my chambers musing. Two strange events had come to pass. I, the descendant of Rupert the discarded, had been invited to the Manor. Moreover, I was in love with Barbara.

The Manor House was a magnificent pile with a background of waving woods. Perhaps it was the presence of undertakers, and a crowd of funeral guests with mourning robes and faces, made me feel the interior so gloomy in its grandeur, notwithstanding the faint smile of Barbara and the courteous reception of Barbara's mother.

Was it chance that assigned to me, the latest comer in the crowded mansion, the apartment at the end of the corridor? I had followed the servant mechanically, my mind filled with Barbara's greeting, and not his apologies; but my rapid survey of the hastily prepared chamber set me thinking.

A label outside the oaken door showed that it was set apart for "Lawyer Stretton's friend." The hurried and bewildered servants had no conception that they had shown Rupert Fosbrooke's representative into Rupert's room.

If I had had a doubt it was dispelled by the sight of a large picture reared against the wall, from which three faces seemed to look at me through a veil of dust.

I have not an atom of superstition in me—at least I had not then. It was rather with reverence than awe that I sacrificed my cambric handkerchief to the restoration of the picture. Then I was struck with the resemblance between my ancestor and myself; and wondered if any of the many assembled relatives would perceive it: never thinking how little was known of the faces I was scanning so minutely.

Yet I think my appearance at the dinner-table did excite some curiosity, if furtive glances and whisperings were any index. Sombre dresses and long faces spoiled the meal for me. I was glad when I found myself back in my room in front of a wood fire kindled at my request; and, taking advantage of the double doors, took out a cigar to make myself at home.

There was a suggestiveness of damp and rheumatism about the heavy velvet-hung four-post bed. I declined its invitation, preferring to wrap myself in my travelling-rug and stretch my limbs on an antique couch at right angles with the hearth. A second cigar sent me to sleep, to dream of Barbara. I awoke shivering, with an uneasy impression of a hand laid on my shoulder to arouse me. The

fire was almost out, the candles quite, but there was a light in the room, and—yes! in the very midst of that light stood Rupert the Painter, palette and brush in hand, painting away at a picture on his easel.

I rubbed my eyes and gave myself a shake. The artist was still at work, and I saw the picture growing under his brush. It was an Alpine scene familiar to myself. Now figures appeared upon the canvas toiling up the snowy ascent. The artist looks round at me, and back at his canvas. I see delineated a broken rope, a shivered alpenstock, and a figure slipping and falling headlong into a terrible crevasse.

Again the artist turns his head, and his dark eyes transfix me. The canvas is blank. Again the brush is plied. Judge, jury, counsel, take their places. I see a brother barrister of long standing addressing the court, see him painted out; and my very counterpart stands out in my very attitude in my most eloquent mood. I see the effect on the faces of judge and jury; it is cheering. The artist turns round and smiles. Picture, painter, easel, light, are gone! I am shivering in the dark, with barely a ray of moonlight straggling in through the windows.

I give myself another shake, say I am an arrant fool, conclude I have been dreaming, and compose myself to sleep again.

Convinced, when I awaken in the morning, that I have been dreaming, I say nothing at the breakfast table of my broken rest, not caring to excite either alarm or ridicule.

As Stretton and I return to town in the express the day after the funeral, I elicit from him that the Squire has another son, now travelling in Switzerland, to whom, of course, the heirship will descend. After that, I fear Stretton has but a stupid companion to the end of the journey.

My survey of the moat, converted into a shrubbery, and the track of the watercourse in dispute, did not tell in my client's interest. Nevertheless, I went into court with a conviction I should win, although I scouted the idea of being influenced by a dream.

And I was successful. The case was dismissed as litigious and vexatious, and when I shook hands with our client, he insisted on my returning with him to the Manor, and said I did honour to the name I bore.

Other cases kept me in town until the end of term. Then I, John Fosbrooke, availed myself of the Squire's invitation, and was welcomed; Mrs. Fosbrooke offering many apologies for my being thrust into an unused room on my former visit. I protested I was perfectly satisfied, and thought it a pity so commodious a chamber should be left to me and the spiders.

The lady sighed, and said no more. This time I occupied the adjoining room, smaller, but well kept, and less antique in its appointments.

The Squire took to me amazingly, and Barbara's heart opened to me. I hesitated how best to disclose my ancestry and propose for the sweet girl, when the whole fabric of my future was shaken by a telegram from Switzerland.

Charles Edward Fosbrooke had perished in the ascent of the Simplon. I was staggered, and the whole family were overwhelmed. It was no time for love proposals.

I volunteered a journey for the recovery of the body; saying that I knew the precise spot in which he was lying. This involved explanation of what I called my dream.

"Dream! It was no dream," cried Barbara and her parents, simultaneously.

"But who are you?" demanded the Squire, rising to his feet, "who have seen the spectral painter of our house? Rupert Fosbrooke never reveals the future save to one of his own near kin."

My answer and its effect may be imagined. An avalanche could scarcely have overwhelmed them more completely. The old Squire, his eyes suffused with tears, held out his hand to me.

"This is no time to perpetuate feud," said he. "Fate is too strong for us."

Need I add that I went to Switzerland and recovered the remains of the last heir of the elder Fosbrookes.

But ere I took my departure, unknown to the family I spent a night in the haunted chamber, still inclined to be sceptical. I came out next morning converted. Once more the mountain scene was painted before me, but I saw myself and guides recovering the lost, and the means employed.

Another picture was painted before me, and then the artist seemed to fling brushes and palette aside, and vanish with a benediction.

I stand, with my now acknowledged relatives, by the grave of the Squire's last son, and see his tears fall fast on the coffin-lid before he turns away, and, grasping my hand, calls me with a sigh the heir of Fosbrooke Manor.

I could hardly realise it then. I can realise it now, as I stand amid a perfect bower of holly and evergreens at Christmas in a pretty country church, and clasp the hand of Barbara before the altar, in that bond which for ever reunites the severed branches, and averts the fate of the Fosbrookes.

And this was the last picture shown to me—now a Fosbrooke of Fosbrooke, a picture of love and peace and goodwill at Christmas-tide.

THE WATER-NIXIE.

A Swedish Legend.

Silvery waters sparkling gaily, golden sunshine bright and warm,
Where the motes are dancing, glancing, and the water-nixies swarm,
Where the snowy lilies, sleeping, lie upon the river's breast,
And the air is sweetly laden with the odours of the west,
Clear and low come softly stealing strains of music to the shore :
Do they come from earth or Heaven ? we could listen evermore.
At the sound the lark, enchanted, pauses on the upward wing,
And a rev'rend father passing thinks he hears an angel sing,
As the words are borne towards him, sinking now, and now they swell :
"I know that my Redeemer liveth," words that Christians love so well.

Leaning on his staff he listens, and he gazes round to see
Whence the voice and who the author of such wondrous minstrelsy.
On the sparkling stream before him sits a tiny water-sprite,
With a crimson cap surmounting wavy tresses soft and light.
"Stay thy song, O being presumptuous ! know destruction is thy doom ;
Not for such as thou the Saviour. Easier for this staff to bloom
Than that thou should'st see Salvation." Thus dissolved his happy dream,
And the nixie, wildly weeping, threw his lyre in the stream.

Then the priest pursued his journey with a self-complacent air.
May'st thou never, rev'rend father, know the meaning of despair !
Lo ! A wonder-working marvel ; see his staff so gnarled and old
Bearing tender leaves and blossoms, which before his eyes unfold !
Know, O priest, 'tis not thy province to restrict the grace Divine,
Which is full and free and boundless, and admits no narrow line.

Humbly did he learn the lesson that the blooming staff conveyed,
And returned towards the river where the weeping nixie stayed.
"Dost thou see this branch of blossoms ? take the comfort that it gives ;
Thus shall hope bud forth within thee, for thy blest Redeemer lives !"

Bright and warm the golden sunbeams which upon the water play,
And the nixie's heart is happy, for the cloud has rolled away.
Once again he tunes his lyre, and the woodland echo rings
With the words of that sweet anthem that the water-spirit sings :
"I know—I know," the echo bears it and repeats it to the shore,
"I know that my Redeemer liveth—liveth—liveth evermore !"

E. L.

THREE HOURS IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

THE incident I am about to relate occurred in Trinidad; not the well-known Trinidad of the West Indies, but a little village in Southern Colorado, almost on the borders of New Mexico. The town, as the inhabitants call it, is situated in a valley in the mountains, and though shadowed and almost encircled by lofty peaks, is nearly 6,000 feet above the sea-level. It is already gaining reputation as a health-giving resort for consumptive patients, and during my stay I saw some extraordinary cures effected through the dry, rarified mountain air.

There was no pretence of fashion in Trinidad; there were no overbearing neighbouring towns to be guided by; the nearest railroad was a hundred miles distant, and the only connecting link a stage-coach. The coach made periodical journeys from Pueblo to Santa Fé, stopping at Trinidad to substitute six wiry bronchos for the four horses by which it had been drawn: for it had to climb through the Raton Pass before the next stage was accomplished. American customs had not superseded the quiet, languid Mexican life.

Low adobe houses were ranged on each side of the narrow street, and in what was generally known as the Mexican quarter, swarthy black-haired women with shawl-covered heads might be seen through the day sitting in groups upon the ground outside their homes. Most of them were plain, if not positively ugly, though here and there one, with perhaps pure Castillian blood in her veins, would redeem her sex from general condemnation by her striking beauty. They would sit for long hours in the warm sunshine, conversing in a Spanish patois with the soft liquid voices peculiar to their race. The men, with broad sombreros and loose garments, with revolver and knife at side, and with huge spurs hung with bells, lounged through the street, cigarette in mouth, as listless and as light-hearted as their señoritas.

North, south, and west, giant peaks formed an almost impassable barrier, but to the east a singular contrast was presented. On that side there stretched, for hundreds of miles, a vast level plain, which gradually became undulating in character, and then formed the fertile prairies of Kansas and Missouri. A little stream, which the Spanish discoverers—always fond of names savouring of their religion—had called the Purgatoire, broke from the hills, and flowed through the village. On its banks grew the sweet-scented acacia, the locust, and the cottonwood, and over them the wild hop trailed and hung from the branches in graceful festoons. An arroya, or watercourse, crossed the main street, but it was dry except when the clouds lowered over Fisher's Peak, and discharged their

vapourous contents in a cataract of rain. Then the water rushed down, carrying away bridges and embankments, tearing large rocks from their beds, and doing damage which it would take months to repair.

The arroya was spanned by a rough wooden bridge, over which passed long bull-trains, consisting of, perhaps, a dozen waggons, each drawn by eight or ten long-horned bullocks, on their way with provisions to Tuos, or Santa Fé, or Chihuahua. Now and then an ambulance would pass through from Fort Union, or a company of rough Indian fighters, fresh from a skirmish with the wily Apaches. Occasionally the Indians would scare the villagers, make a raid among the widely-scattered flocks and herds, and if in a good humour would retire to their fastnesses satisfied with the damage they had caused.

Except these occasional visitors and a stray invalid or traveller, Trinidad appeared to the new comer a place far away from the world of rushing, heedless American life—just as we sometimes find a quaint little English village, where the daily paper is rarely seen, the telegraph unknown, and pigs and crops form the staple subjects of conversation. But beneath the outward calm and health which appear to reign in such spots there sometimes exists a deep local canker, undermining and destroying the vigorous, but quiet, life. Perhaps it may yield to homœopathic treatment, but it often requires remedies almost as dangerous as the disease. Trinidad, with all its lovely scenery, its loneliness, and its seeming immobility, teemed with a life which threatened to make quiet existence impossible. The element of discord had been introduced into it by the increasing American population. From its solitary position and the close vicinity of a territory with different laws, it was becoming the home of lawless refugees, who fled from the justice which might overtake them in a more accessible region.

My first experience of this danger occurred only a fortnight after my arrival.

I had just returned from dinner, which in that district is taken at the primitive hour of noon, and had settled comfortably to work, when I heard several shots fired, apparently within a few yards of the building, and saw men running towards the Mexican part of the village. Hastily strapping my revolver on my side, I followed them. A few steps brought me to a knot of men gathered around something lying upon one of the rocky foothills at the base of the great peak. Forcing my way through the throng I found the reason of their hurry. At my feet was the body of a tall stalwart man, whose athletic form was remarkable even in that region of powerful men. He was quite dead, though scarcely three minutes had elapsed since the firing was heard. A hurried examination showed how sure had been the aim of his antagonist: he had been pierced by three bullets, either of which would have taken the life of the strongest man in the territory.

On the breast of his coarse blue woollen shirt was a small round stain scarcely larger than a half-crown, and a narrower inspection disclosed the tiny hole through which the ball had pierced to his heart. Another even less conspicuous wound was visible in his breast, while a third shot had penetrated his back. Finding himself sorely wounded he had turned to fly, and then the last pitiless aim had been taken. Although the target had been a human body the men around the victim could not help admiring and commenting on the marvellous accuracy of the aim taken, though all were good shots, and one or two of the bystanders were said to be able to hit a "nickel," or five-cent-piece, at twenty paces with the revolver.

There was something, however, to think of besides the accuracy of the shooting. Who had committed the deed, and where had he fled, were the questions which arose among the now excited crowd. Soon a man was descried running at some distance from the spot, and evidently trying to conceal himself by the inequalities of the ground. His haste availed him naught; there was no thick timber or brush in which he could hide, no friend's house close at hand in which he might find a temporary refuge. The marshal, an officer whose duties correspond with those of an inspector of police in this country, but with greater powers, had by this time arrived, and started on horseback, with another man, to capture the fugitive. He was soon overtaken, and commanded to halt. He threw one look at his pursuers, and made a movement towards his weapon, but was peremptorily ordered to hold his hands above his head. Seeing that with his half-emptied revolver he would have little chance of success against two men armed with repeating rifles, he halted and complied. To dismount and bind his hands was the work of a moment, and then he was led into the village. The jail being insecure, it was decided that he should be locked in a house and guarded by two men until it was settled what course of action should be pursued.

The cause of the murder was soon ascertained. Barnard O'Neil, or Barney, as he was familiarly called, a jovial, popular Irishman, had claimed a piece of Government land in the village. The United States law gives to every citizen the privilege of entering into possession of a stated amount of Government soil upon complying with certain easily-fulfilled conditions. He may acquire a small plot of town land, or, according to circumstances, a farm of 80, 160, or 320 acres. But the claimant must improve the land within a fixed period to show his bonâ fide intention to apply it to his own use. Within a month from the day on which he claimed the land he must fence it, or break the sod, or lay the foundations of a house, or do other necessary work to prove that he has entered into actual possession. If he fail in this, the land reverts to the Government, and is free to any new applicant. Such is the law, but its stipulations are often unfulfilled, and anyone taking advantage of the neglect by "jumping the claim," as it is called, is apt to fare badly in that freest of free countries

Barnard O'Neil, as I said before, had "taken up" a town lot, but had failed to make his title good, and another Irishman, William Dennis, had "jumped him," and at once commenced work. The earlier claimant, seeing his proceedings, went to the spot to remonstrate, and a quarrel ensued. As usual in such cases, recourse was had to the weapon always carried; Dennis was quicker in his movements than his opponent, and fired with deadly aim, laying his adversary lifeless upon the soil which he thought his own.

Such was the account given as we returned into the street.

The letter, if not the spirit of the law, was partially acted up to: a jury was summoned, and a coroner's inquest was held. During its progress the townsmen gathered en masse in the street, for it was evident that the time had arrived when they must either administer justice with their own hands or permit lawless desperadoes to exert undisturbed sway throughout the district. Up to that time brawls terminating in bloodshed had been of frequent occurrence. The few officers of justice had been set at defiance. When a man killed another he was only required to retire into the country for a short time. He might visit his friends, see that the stock on his ranch were thriving, or amuse himself in any way he pleased, and then, on his return, but very feeble efforts would be made to enforce the law.

One crime alone was punished with severity: woe to the man who stole a horse. He who shot another might go scathless, but he who mistook another man's horse for his own, was doomed. He might attempt to escape, but swift riders dogged his footsteps and followed his trail for hundreds of miles, and when at last he was captured a short shrift and a long rope awaited him. This state of affairs had become unendurable, and it was resolved to set such a terrible example that a repetition of past scenes of violence should be impossible. Men of all grades of society were gathered together with one common object, and when feeling is unanimous it is not often difficult to decide upon the course to pursue.

The jury did not deliberate long. As was anticipated, a verdict of "Wilful Murder" was returned against the miserable man who had been captured almost with blood upon his hands, and was then confined scarcely beyond hearing. The result was immediately communicated to the crowd outside, who were anxiously awaiting the decision. Ten well-armed men at once went to the house in which the murderer had been confined, and were challenged by the guard.

"What do you want?" was the inquiry, as the guard placed themselves before the door.

"Let us pass; we want Dennis, and we are going to have him," was the immediate rejoinder.

"He is in our charge," replied the guard, "and must be tried by the law."

"You represent a law which is ineffective," said the foremost man, as he pushed towards the door.

One blow with the butt-end of his rifle was sufficient to force open the frail defence, and, disdaining further parley, the attacking party at once rushed into the house. The guard discharged their revolvers, but their feeling was entirely in accord with those against whose conduct they were bound to protest, and in order to make a show of resistance, and at the same time be sure that no injury should be done, they very cautiously fired into the air.

The criminal was brought into the street. He well knew the fate that awaited him, but he was as resolute as his captors, and much calmer. He made no outcries for mercy, he did not beg to be allowed to live, or even pray for a few hours for repentance. He had taken the life of his fellow man, and he saw, from the faces which glowered upon him, that he must pay the forfeit with his own. His guilt he frankly admitted, and a confession which he dictated was taken down by the magistrate. In it he briefly recapitulated the details I have already given, and concluded his statement with the words, "I die as I have lived, a brave man," and with a calm and steady hand he made a cross at the foot of the paper, for he was unable to write. Then his arms were again bound behind him and he was led towards the river, closely guarded that no attempt at rescue might be made.

Through the thick underbrush and prickly locust-trees, which hid the sun he was never to see again, the criminal was led, and the grim procession halted beneath a sturdy piñon-tree. A lariat had been brought by a man in the crowd; the prisoner was lifted into a waggon, his feet were bound, and the strong rope, which had been strained and tested by wild Cherokee cattle, was fixed round his throat. I will not detail the last terrible scene. He was not unnerved throughout the awful preparation; perhaps, of all the sturdy, fearless men around him, he was the most unmoved, and he carried out his intention of "dying a brave man" according to his own weak, untaught light.

The little stream ran rippling onward, the trees murmured to the breeze which swept through the branches and made music with their leaves, and the snow-capped peaks glimmered and shone fitfully in the changing sunlight, as though nature had not been abused by man's crime and man's retribution. A sin had been committed, and, in the name of justice, the soul of a fellow being had been sent to "that bourne from whence no traveller returneth." It was the fulfilment of the Divine law, "A life for a life."

In knots of twos and threes the actors and spectators returned to the village, and within three hours of the time the fatal shots were fired the little current of life was running smoothly. The carpenter's hammer roused the mountain echoes, the pick of the miner unearthed the mineral treasures of the ravines around, and the hunter plodded his lonely way through the dark cañons of the wooded hills.

IN SEARCH OF A WIFE.

IN one of the six-storied mansions of the Rue Meslay, the second floor had been lately taken and furnished by M. Anastase Pinard, a retired mercer of the Rue des Lombards, where, thanks to the prevailing demand for flannel waistcoats and cotton nightcaps, he had contrived to amass a snug little fortune of £600 a year. He was about forty-nine, without kith or kin; short, stout, with small twinkling eyes, a snub nose, and wiry hair. His mouth habitually wore a vacant and self-satisfied smile, and his walk was a sort of cross between a strut and a waddle. Morally, M. Anastase partook of the usual characteristics of his class. He was credulous in the highest degree, easily imposed on, and by no means unwilling to impose on others when an opportunity offered; he had an exalted opinion of his own merits and intelligence, and loved politics almost as well as he did dominoes.

His establishment was superintended by his housekeeper, Mdme. Grégoire, a buxom Normande of some six-and-thirty summers, formerly dame de comptoir in the Rue des Lombards; which post she had exchanged on M. Pinard's retirement for that of femme de charge in the Rue Meslay. Her attachment to him resembled that of Mrs. Subtle in "Paul Pry," but with a notable difference; while she was fully as cunning and unscrupulous as her distinguished prototype, she had not sufficient tact to disguise her sentiments, but allowed herself occasionally to betray her native rapacity in a manner which, with all his obtuseness, her master could hardly fail to see through. But he kept his own counsel; she suited him, at least for the present, and he chuckled at the thought of her dismay when a project he had been some time secretly nurturing should at last be carried into effect.

One evening at the café, between two games at dominoes with his usual adversary, Fromageot, a purveyor of denrées coloniales, as he himself said, or épicier, as everyone else called him, he determined on adroitly broaching this, to him, all-important topic, and began by asking his companion, a married man of some thirty years' standing, how his wife was.

"Aglaé," replied Fromageot, "never had a day's illness in her life; the Pont Neuf is nothing to her. There she sits, morning, noon, and night, making up the books, attending to the customers, looking after everything and everybody! Ah! mon cher, you don't know the blessing of such a wife as Mdme. Fromageot!"

Anastase heaved a gentle sigh, half sympathetic, half regretful.

"She was talking of you the other day," continued the purveyor. She was saying what a pity it was that you should remain single,

when you might pick and choose anywhere in the quarter. 'There's Mdlle. Martinet, for instance,' said she, 'the apothecary's daughter, just the age for him (she owns to twenty-six, but she *is* twenty-nine), an only child, and will have thirty thousand francs when papa dies.' Think of that, mon vieux, thirty thousand francs!"

"But would the father consent?" said Anastase.

"Consent!" cried Fromageot, "*I'll* answer for that. Come, what say you? Shall I get papa Martinet to give a little soirée, just to set things going?"

"I've no objection," replied the would-be Benedict, wondering in his own mind what Mdme. Grégoire would say if she heard of it.

"Then it's a bargain! You shall have your invitation to-morrow. Good night and good luck."

Next day, the letter-carrier of the district deposited the expected missive with M. Pinard's concierge. The invitation was for the following evening; and Anastase, having with admirable forethought secured the absence of his housekeeper during his toilette, by the timely present of a ticket for the Ambigu, proceeded to adorn himself with a care befitting the occasion: and a little before nine made his entrée into M. Martinet's salon, where about a dozen persons, including M. and Mdme. Fromageot, were already assembled.

Nothing could be more cordial than his reception by the master of the house, a tall, thin man in spectacles, not unlike a full-grown asparagus. Mdme. Martinet, on the contrary, was short and of alarmingly voluminous proportions, with very small eyes, and a voice ranging from a croak to a squeak. Their daughter and heiress, Mdlle. Virginie, was somewhat angular in figure, with one shoulder (if we may be allowed to quote Arnal) "more ambitious" than the other. Had she been an actress, she would inevitably have been classed among the grues; as the future possessor of thirty thousand francs, she was habitually spoken of as "une demoiselle parfaitement élevée," a term usually synonymous with extreme plainness.

"Eh bien?" whispered Fromageot to his friend, after the ceremonies of introduction had been gone through.

"She's no beauty," replied Anastase doubtingly, glancing at the sallow complexion and inexpressive countenance of his prétendue with no very gratified eye.

"But *such* a manager!" exclaimed the other enthusiastically. "Keeps all her father's accounts, and has the best recipe for cherry brandy I ever tasted! Make up to her, man! They're preparing a table for loto, and you are to sit by her—Aglaé has arranged that already with papa Martinet."

"Hum!" ejaculated M. Pinard, more dubiously than before.

However, there was no help for it; the loto box had been extracted from a corner-cupboard, and Mdme. Martinet was hard at work

distributing the counters; so there was nothing left for Anastase but to occupy the seat prepared for him, and make himself as agreeable to his fair neighbour as his utter ignorance of her tastes, habits, and inclinations would allow.

His first attempts were singularly infelicitous. After eloquently expatiating on the merits of a new drama, and utterly regardless of a battery of telegraphic signs directed towards him by Mdme. Fromageot, he was drily informed by his host that such subjects not being in unison with his ideas of propriety, any further allusion to them would be, to say the least, inopportune. Driven from this, his conversational stronghold, Anastase only made matters worse by inquiring Mdlle. Virginie's opinion respecting a recently published novel; for here again he was interrupted by M. Martinet, who emphatically denounced all works of fiction as frivolities unworthy of serious consideration, and the mere mention of which he considered totally inconsistent with the proper amount of attention required by the intellectual game of loto.

"Que diable suis-je venu faire dans cette galère!" muttered the now thoroughly discomfited Pinard, after which indistinct reminiscence of Molière he relapsed into a gloomy silence, and commenced arranging the heap of counters before him in uniform piles.

"Come, papa Martinet," exclaimed Fromageot, coming to the rescue, "our friend has never tasted your punch. When you *have*," added he, addressing Anastase, "you will give me your opinion of it."

The apothecary, visibly flattered, withdrew, and soon after returned with a huge bowl filled to the brim with the smoking beverage, and impregnating the room with a strong odour of Jamaica rum. A perceptible thaw gradually dispelled the formality of the réunion. M. Martinet, filling his glass, solemnly proposed the health of his new acquaintance; and M. Pinard, filling *his*, drank to the Martinets in general, and to Mdlle. Virginie in particular. The loto, by common consent, was abandoned; Mdme. Martinet's little eyes twinkled benignantly under the influence of the fragrant liquid, and Anastase, after a second glass, emboldened by what he imagined to be a smile, but which was in reality a suppressed yawn of Mdlle. Virginie, ventured on a third, and without more ado dashed headlong into

"Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé."

Had a bomb burst among the assembled company, it could hardly have produced a more astounding effect. M. Martinet, who was in the act of lifting his glass to his mouth, paused in speechless horror, and gazed at the singer with as stony an expression as that of the commander's statue when addressing Don Giovanni.

Fromageot was the first to recover himself.

"Ah ça! are you mad?" said he to the perfectly bewildered Pinard.

"Idiot!" murmured Mdme. Fromageot.

Anastase looked from one to the other in undisguised amazement.

"Why, what *is* the matter?" he faltered out.

"Matter, sir!" interrupted the apothecary with an icy sneer; "was it not enough that our moral susceptibilities should be disgusted —yes, sir, disgusted by the inane flippancy of your conversation, without the additional shock you have thought proper to inflict upon us by your open avowal of political sentiments as—as subversive as they are reprehensible?"

"But, papa Martinet ——"

"No undue familiarity, sir, I must insist. So direct an allusion, sir, in *this* house to the execrable doctrines of '93 is a misdemeanour which no excuses can possibly palliate! Monsieur, I have the honour to wish you a good evening. You shall never be my son-in-law!"

How Anastase reached his home he scarcely knew. He had a faint recollection of having given vent to his rage in sundry uncomplimentary epithets; but the scene he had just gone through, aided perhaps by the fumes of the punch, had so confused his never very acute intellect, that the events of the last few hours appeared to his troubled brain more like an unpleasant dream than an actual reality. However, Mdme. Grégoire had not yet returned, and that, thought he, as he exchanged his dress coat for the more comfortable dressing gown, was *some* consolation.

A few days later, while mechanically skimming the evening paper, his eye lit on an advertisement which seemed greatly to interest him.

"The very thing!" said he. "I wonder I never thought of it before." And, calling for pen, ink, and paper, he commenced inditing a brief but apparently satisfactory epistle, for he smiled approvingly as he read it over; then, sallying forth, posted it with his own hand, and returned home in high good humour.

Everyone knows that the Rue des Colonnes is a short street, running parallel, as far as it goes, with the Rue Richelieu; but everyone does not know that at the period of this veracious history, the above-mentioned street counted among its most distinguished inhabitants Mdme. Saint-Luc. The profession of this lady, as philanthropic as it was lucrative, may be described in the terms of her own advertisements: "She made marriages," a negotiation doubtless as advantageous to the human race in general as to Mdme. Saint-Luc in particular. We need not be surprised, therefore, if a day or two after the events already related we find our worthy friend, M. Anastase Pinard, mounting the rather steep flight of stairs leading to Mdme. Saint-Luc's apartment on the third floor, for the purpose of keeping an appointment he had solicited and obtained from her.

A smartly-dressed maidservant opened the door and ushered our hero into the salon, a showily-furnished room, the walls of which were decorated with sundry coloured lithographs in tawdry gilt frames; the central ornament of the chimney-piece was a large bronze-gilt clock, surmounted by a figure with a torch in its hand, supposed to represent Hymen. In a minute or two the rustling of a silk dress announced the arrival of Mdme. Saint-Luc, an elderly personage of imposing and dignified aspect, who received M. Pinard very graciously, and, after a few preparatory compliments had been exchanged, professed herself ready and anxious to promote, to the utmost of her power, the wishes of (without flattery) so distinguished a gentleman.

Anastase bowed and muttered, sotto voce, "Too amiable!"

"For, monsieur," continued Mdme. Saint-Luc, "I need hardly remark to a man of the world like yourself that the choice of a wife being—ahem!—a *very* serious matter, demands a more than ordinary skill and tact on the part of the negotiator. I have no wish to overrate any qualities of the kind I may possess, but I *think* I may say that the innumerable instances of conjugal felicity originated and developed (so to speak) by my humble efforts are sufficient proofs of my conscientious devotion to the interests of my clients."

Anastase bowed again, and wished the old lady would come to the point.

"In your case, however, Monsieur, there will be no difficulty. The particulars mentioned in your letter respecting your financial position are such as must ensure your success, when coupled, allow me to say, with so prepossessing an exterior. On the receipt of your missive, I referred to my list of desirable partis, and immediately selected *one* (here she paused significantly)—a treasure, Monsieur—a treasure!"

"And that is ——"

"A widow lady, from thirty-two to thirty-five apparently, personally attractive, without incumbrance, and possessing at her own disposal a fortune of twelve thousand francs a year."

"Is the name a secret?"

"Not to you, Monsieur, but of course in the strictest confidence. The lady I allude to is Mdme. Dubois de Rueil."

"Noble?" exclaimed the delighted Anastase.

"One of the oldest families in Picardy, Madame informs me," was the satisfactory reply.

"And when can I hope ——"

"To-morrow, Monsieur, at the same hour, I will arrange that Mdme. Dubois de Rueil shall meet you here. But, pardon me," added she, as Anastase rose to depart, "if I remind you that the preparatory fee is one hundred francs. The remaining four hundred will not be payable until *after* the ceremony."

This little hint having been duly attended to, the interview came to a close, and Anastase returned to the Rue Meslay complacently meditating on the happy result of his expedition, and inwardly con-

gratulating himself on his probable future connection with one of the oldest families in Picardy.

It is hardly necessary to state that on his appearance next day in the Rue des Colonnes M. Pinard's toilette was irreproachable.

On his arrival, he was ushered into a small apartment, which served as Mdme. Saint-Luc's usual sitting-room. The presiding genius of this Temple of Hymen received him even more affably than on the preceding day; and, informing him that Mdme. Dubois de Rueil was already in the salon, proceeded to escort him thither. Notwithstanding his attempts to appear perfectly at his ease, Anastase could not repress a slight feeling of trepidation on finding himself in the presence of his unknown inamorata; and his nervousness became positively painful, when, after a few words of ceremonious introduction, Mdme. Saint-Luc discreetly withdrew, and left her two clients together.

An Englishman in a similar situation would probably have remembered that "faint heart never won fair lady." M. Pinard, being a Frenchman, bethought himself that "who risks nothing wins nothing," and drawing a chair near the sofa on which the widow was seated, ventured to break the ice by a cursory remark on that very convenient topic the weather. Up to this time his constitutional timidity had prevented him from hazarding more than a shy and rapid glance in the direction of his interesting neighbour, but what he *did* see was not discouraging.

Mdme. Dubois de Rueil, in fact, resembled Mrs. Bubb of "one-horse shay" notoriety; she was "fair, fat, and forty-three"—the data confided to, or invented by, Mdme. Saint-Luc being naturally a pleasant fiction—her complexion was, perhaps, a trifle too florid, and her eyelids might have been a little less elongated; but, on the whole, she presented an agreeable specimen of female comeliness on rather a large scale. By degrees the conversation, at first almost monosyllabic on the part of the lady, became more animated and more confidential; certain allusions to the late Dubois de Rueil, cut off, as it appeared, in the flower of his youth, were delicately responded to by the sympathetic Anastase, who, after a tête-à-tête of three-quarters of an hour, finally obtained permission, with a view to further arrangements, to visit the fascinating widow at her own residence in the Rue Neuve des Mathurins.

We will pass briefly over the period of courtship. Suffice it to say that, before many days had elapsed, M. Pinard found himself on the footing of an accepted suitor; the legal formalities had been duly attended to, and the names, addresses, and social qualifications of the happy pair had appeared among the weekly announcements at the Mairie. Arrangements had been made by Anastase with an eminent florist for the daily bouquet to be presented (according to Parisian custom) to his future bride, and his own diurnal visits to the Rue Neuve des Mathurins had been accomplished with the most methodical regularity.

It is hardly to be supposed that so complete a revolution in the economy of her master's hitherto monotonous existence could escape the notice of so acute and interested an observer as Mdme. Grégoire. Nor did it. From the day of his first visit to the Rue des Colonnes her suspicions had been aroused, and it subsequently required no great penetration on her part to divine that M. Pinard's daily absences, and the unusual odour of ess-bouquet pervading the entire apartment had some definite object, which it was as much her business to discover, as it was his evident purpose to conceal.

A few insidious questions, and certain (of course) accidental rencontres in the vicinity of the Rue Neuve des Mathurins, combined with a little judicious bribing of the widow's concierge, soon told her all she wished to know: and any doubts she might still have entertained were finally set at rest by a perusal of the evening paper, wherein the approaching union between M. Anastase Pinard, rentier, and Mdme. de Rueil, rentière, was formally announced. Strange to say, this eventful paragraph appeared in no way to discompose her; nay, she smiled as she read it, and laying the journal aside, was proceeding to try on a charmingly coquettish cap with pink ribbons, when she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of her master.

If Mdme. Grégoire's countenance wore at this moment an unusually placid expression, that of Anastase, on the contrary, betrayed a mind manifestly perplexed and ill at ease. For the near approach of his marriage, added to the express injunctions of his fiancée, whose susceptibilities were shocked by the continued presence under his roof of a housekeeper possibly younger than herself, made it absolutely necessary for him to bring matters to an immediate issue, or, in other words, to give Mdme. Grégoire her congé.

"How *shall* I do it?" he had repeated to himself at least a dozen times during his walk, but without any satisfactory solution of the problem. We may, therefore, imagine his surprise when the housekeeper, after removing the very becoming cap, quietly handed him the newspaper, and remarked in the calmest and most indifferent tone:

"So Monsieur is about to marry!"

"She knew it then, after all, the sly minx!" thought Anastase.

"Ahem! Suzon" (he always called her Suzon), "why, it is not impossible, that is to say ——"

"Monsieur is his own master," continued she; "monsieur will be pleased to accept my congratulations."

"How well she takes it, poor thing!" muttered Anastase to himself. "Yes, Suzon, it must come some time—and I have not forgotten you—see here," and unlocking his bureau, he extracted from one of the drawers a slip of paper, and handed it to Madame Grégoire, accompanying the gift with, I am ashamed to say, a hearty kiss.

"*Five* hundred francs a year. Ah, monsieur!" exclaimed the astonished Normande, who had not counted on more than *three*.

"Payables au porteur!" impressively remarked M. Pinard. "You see, you lose nothing by the change."

"True, Monsieur," said Suzon, demurely; "for I gain a souvenir of your kindness—and a husband."

"A what?" cried Anastase, rather alarmed.

"A husband, Monsieur. When I heard a *fortnight ago*" (with a stress on the words) "that Monsieur purposed marrying, I thought of poor Mitouflet, Monsieur remembers, our head clerk in the Rue des Lombards. He is about to set up in business for himself, and wants a wife. Bref, monsieur, he asked me, and I said yes, and we are to be married to-morrow."

"He's a lucky fellow," said M. Pinard, calling to mind the five hundred francs a year he had just parted with, and thinking that half the sum would have been quite enough for Mitouflet. "Bon soir, Suzon."

"Bonne nuit, Monsieur."

Another week had gone by. M. Mitouflet had already installed his blooming rentière in his newly opened establishment, situatedin the Rue St. Denis, and bearing the appropriate sign, "Au bonnet de coton." Anastase, since the departure of his housekeeper, feeling lonely in the solitude of his own apartment, passed most of his time in the Rue Neuve des Mathurins, where the happy couple intended to take up their abode, Mdme. Dubois de Rueil declining to inhabit so unfashionable a quarter as the Rue Meslay. On the evening but one preceding the day appointed for the wedding, he was seated in the widow's boudoir, awaiting her return from a shopping excursion in the neighbourhood, when a ring was heard at the outer door.

"Ah! la voilà!" said M. Pinard, rising from his chair with as much alacrity as his corpulence would permit. The sound of a strange voice, however, parleying with the maidservant, fell on his ear, and he resumed his seat with a shrug of disappointment.

"Some tradesman," thought he.

A minute after the door opened, and a middle-aged man soberly dressed in black, and without beard or moustache, walked quietly in, and, taking no notice of Anastase beyond the slightest possible inclination of the head, deposited his hat on one chair and himself on another.

"The notary, probably," muttered the ex-mercer to himself; "she said yesterday she had asked him to call." Then, turning to the new-comer, he blandly enquired:

"Monsieur has an appointment with Mdme. de Rueil?"

"Don't know her," was the laconic answer. "I wish to see Mdme. Dubois."

"De Rueil!" insinuated M. Pinard.

"What do you mean by Rueil?" asked the stranger in his turn.

"The only Rueil I ever heard of is a little village near Paris, where I was born, by the way."

"Monsieur," remonstrated Anastase, solemnly, "we are at cross-purposes; Mdme. Dubois de Rueil ——"

"Ah ça!" interrupted the man in black, looking very hard at our friend Pinard; "and who may you be, old gentleman? You seem to make yourself at home here!"

"Monsieur," replied Anastase, with a glance of ineffable contempt, "I have a *right* to feel myself at home here. In forty-eight hours I hope to call the mistress of this apartment my wife."

"*You!*" shouted the supposed notary. "The man's mad! Ought to be at Charenton!" continued he. "Why, sir, let me tell you"—at this critical juncture his explanation was cut short by a sharp tug at the door-bell, followed by the immediate entrance of the widow, who no sooner caught sight of the stranger than she uttered a loud shriek, and fell fainting on the sofa.

Anastase stood for a moment in petrified amazement; then, recovering himself, rushed to the aid of his betrothed. But the man in black had been beforehand with him, and was actively engaged in besprinkling her with a glass of eau sucré, prepared by M. Pinard for his own especial delectation.

"Monsieur!" exclaimed Anastase, in a transport of fury, "leave madame to me! I tell you, you have no business here!"

"Haven't I?" sarcastically returned the man in black, coolly resuming his occupation with such effect that the lady at last opened her eyes, and faintly gasping, "Polyte! I thought you were dead!" went off again in a second swoon.

"Polyte!" ejaculated Anastase, completely bewildered.

"Hippolyte, if you prefer it," tranquilly observed the stranger. "Hippolyte Dubois, at your service, the husband of Mdme. Dubois de Rueil as you call her, heaven knows why, and secretary to the Mutual Revolver and Bowie-knife Life-protecting Society (happy to let you have any amount of shares by-the-by) in San Francisco, where I have been settled for the last five years. You must know we didn't get on very well together, so I left her to better my fortune, and she stayed at home, and went companion to a lady. Well, to make a long story short, we never corresponded; she thought I was dead, and I thought *she* was. Three months ago I saw in a Paris paper that she had come into a handsome legacy from the old woman, and fancied a share of it wouldn't do me any harm, so I applied for leave, started, and finally tracked her here, just in time, as it seems; and we shall be en route for San Francisco before she's a fortnight older. So you see, my good sir, I *have* some business here, and you have none. Therefore," (pointing to the door) "sans rancune. You understand."

"I do, sir," replied Anastase haughtily, and with one farewell glance

at the still half insensible figure on the sofa, he majestically left the room.

On the following day, Monsieur Pinard gave up the lease of his apartment to his landlord at a considerable loss, and betook himself and household goods to the remote solitude of the Batignolles. Before finally taking leave of him, we will briefly advert to the subsequent fortunes of the minor personages in our sketch.

The establishment in the Rue St. Denis, thanks to the energy of Mdme. Mitouflet, continues steadily to advance in public favour and prosperity; there is, however, some talk of its being soon transported to the original mercerie of the Rue des Lombards, vacant by the retirement of the proprietor.

M. and Mdme. Fromageot are still in high force, and have recently started a succursale for the sale of denrées coloniales in the Rue St. Honoré, under the direction of their nephew Chipotard, assisted by his wife, née Martinet. It is but fair to state that the success of this enterprise is mainly due to the cherry brandy of Mdme. Virginie Chipotard.

Mdme. Saint-Luc never received the four hundred francs forfeited by the non-accomplishment of the projected union of her clients: we have, however, every reason to believe that she (or her successor) still continues to exercise her philanthropic calling in the Rue des Colonnes.

Of M. Dubois, or his intended journey to California, nothing further ever transpired. It has been conjectured that his reconciliation with his wife was of short duration, from the circumstance of a lady answering her description, and styling herself Mdme. St. Phar de Montmorency, having been subsequently recognised as presiding over a pension and table d'hôte of rather questionable character in the Rue Bréda.

One of the smallest and most retired houses in the Rue des Dames, the fashionable locality of the Batignolles, has long counted among its inmates our friend Anastase Pinard. Twenty years have made but little alteration in him: he is a trifle stouter, and walks rather less nimbly than before; but he is still as simple, credulous, and good-humoured as we remember him in the Rue Meslay. He is a great oracle at the café, where he passes his evenings in the excitement of dominoes and finding fault with every successive government, whether imperial, communist, or republican. Of his two unlucky courtships he never speaks, but becomes remarkably sarcastic when his opinion is asked relative to any matrimonial project entertained by the younger habitués; and generally closes the conversation with a Gallic paraphrase of *Punch's* celebrated advice to persons about to marry—

"Don't!"

C. H.

ONE FATAL NIGHT.

By Charles W. Wood, Author of "Through Holland."

MY father had taken honours at Oxford, but his health, not particularly robust, partly gave way under the strain of hard work and late hours. He was never again quite the man he had been. Nevertheless, after being five years in orders, he found himself one morning rector of a comfortable country living, from which he was not to be promoted. He did not live long enough to occupy the stall, or wear the apron, that might one day be his. Whilst a curate at Exby he had fallen in love with Lady Anne Norton, and she with him. They kept their secret until he became rector of Combe-Carden. Then in fear and much inward misgiving, yet not without boldness, he went up and asked the Earl for his youngest daughter.

Perhaps because, though poor, he was of irreproachable descent; perhaps from his refinement of manner, his great powers of conversation, his unusually good looks; perhaps from the Earl's being blessed with six marriageable but unmarried daughters: or it may be from a combination of all these reasons, and not from any one in particular: the Earl, after some little hesitation, gave his consent. The engagement of the Reverend George Wellesley and the Lady Anne Norton was announced to the world, and in due time the marriage took place.

The Earl of Norwich was not a rich man, and her dowry consisted of one thousand pounds only. This sum was spent in enlarging and improving the rectory; and they settled down in one of the prettiest homes in England. Alas! their happiness was short-lived. I, the sole offspring of the union, was only four years old when my mother took a severe cold. This turned to inflammation of the lungs, and in less than a fortnight her place knew her no more.

I can just remember her. A small, gentle, lovable lady, with a quiet, musical voice—that most excellent thing in woman—a soft tread, and one of the loveliest faces ever seen in this world. She was worshipped by the village poor, idolized by her husband. My father, so to say, never looked up after his wife's death. He went through his daily work mechanically, as one whose heart is no longer upon earth. In less than a year he was laid beside my mother in the small churchyard of Combe-Carden, and the living passed into strange hands.

I was taken to London, to my uncle. Henceforth his house became my home. Here I breathed a very different atmosphere, morally as well as physically, from that I had just quitted. Child though I was, I realized the change. The atmosphere of peace, o

extreme refinement, was exchanged for that of wealth, luxury, and fashion.

My uncle was ten years my father's senior. He had early shown remarkable talents for finance, and entered the great banking house of Marlow and Marlow. The credit of the firm stood second to none in the city, and eight years after entering it my uncle had become a partner. Immediately after this, he married Jane Marlow, only daughter of the younger of the two brothers, with whom he had a large dowry: and thus found himself launched, on all sides, on the full tide of prosperity.

Mrs. Eustace Wellesley was a woman amiable only for her husband. Her passionate love for him made her, in one sense, a good wife. But she was proud, ambitious; in temper hasty and unforgiving. Her hopes were centred upon her one child, a son: born five years after the marriage. John Wellesley was nearly four years my senior. The boy was indulged by his mother until he was rendered selfish, regardless of the feelings of others, and taught to believe that his will and way were to rule the world.

Almost from the first day I entered their house, I was made to suffer at his hands. Petty tyranny, slights and small insults of every description this boy of eight visited upon me. I bore it long in silence. But as time went on, and I grew strong and sturdy for my age, I learned to retaliate. My cousin hated me in consequence. As the years passed, I was ever ready to make friends with him; to yield the first place to him, which was his by right. I never succeeded in softening his animosity. I have not succeeded to this day.

Mrs. Wellesley took an equal dislike to me. I should have been banished to school over and over again, and probably have been the happier, but it pleased her vain mind to be able to show me off as her nephew, "the grandson of the Earl of Norwich." The Marlows had been self-made men. My uncle I loved with all the passionate fervour of a neglected, homeless, unloved child. He alone was ever kind and good to me, and in disputes would oftener take my part than that of his own boy.

"Poor lad!" he would return, in answer to his wife's remonstrances, "he has no one to stand up for him. Compare his future with John's. George will have to fight his battle with the world: perhaps have to rough it through life. Make this home, whilst he is in it, as much a home to him as you can."

It was cruel kindness on my uncle's part. I was always made to suffer doubly for his championship. But it served to render the house bearable, and perhaps prevented downright ill-treatment from Mrs. Wellesley.

So time went on. At thirteen John went to Eton, and my life became comparatively happy and tranquil. At thirteen, I also followed in his footsteps. The following year my aunt died. My

uncle never married again. He applied himself more closely than ever to business, and only relaxed when his boys were at home. He called us both his boys, and invariably treated us alike.

Again the time went on. I went to Cambridge, and took honours without difficulty. I had inherited my father's talents, but not his delicate health. I was strong, and a head taller than my cousin. The world said I had inherited the good looks of both my parents: a subject that troubled me little, until—but I must not anticipate.

John left Cambridge three years before I did. That is to say, when I went up he went down. Thus we did not clash in our college life. As young men we were sufficiently wise to agree to differ, without coming to open warfare. Yet I could see that he never liked me: might possibly only want the opportunity some day to do me an ill turn. He left college without having distinguished himself, but this was from want of application, not for lack of talent. He might have made a name in the world, but for his innate indolence. I sometimes think he may do so still, should he ever go into Parliament. But where was the necessity for hard work and all that, some argued, when John Wellesley would be one of the richest commoners in England?

My cousin had two ruling passions—his love of wealth, which led him to do inconceivably mean and close things; and a love of diamonds. Not the littleness which desires to wear them about the person: his mania was to collect unset stones of the purest water. A magnificent specimen was sure to find a customer in him, if he could spare the sum at the moment. I once asked him why he was so fond of these stones. He replied that he did not know. A something within him attracted him with the fascination of a basilisk. And, he added, so long as he could afford to indulge his mania, he thought it as sensible as going in for cracked china, or balloons, or any other caprice that men take up.

I left college. Possessing the required gifts for the profession, I decided to become a barrister. I was a ready speaker; had a powerful and singularly retentive memory; was quick at seizing the points of a case. Therefore I chose the bar; and, with my uncle's full sanction, entered myself at the Inner Temple.

I remember well a conversation I had with my uncle Eustace at this time, and his concluding words.

"George," said he, "you have now chosen your path in life. I think you have chosen wisely. With your powers and energies the highest honours of the law may in time become yours. Hard work lies before you——"

"I am not afraid of that, sir," I modestly put in.

"I was about to say so," returned my uncle. "I could almost have wished a similar prospect for John. But his lot will be different from yours. His fortune is made: you have to make your own—as I made mine. The back is fitted to the burden." My

uncle sighed: whether at the burden of his immense wealth, or at the thought that his son, though rich would never be distinguished, I could hardly tell.

"I have cared for you almost equally," he continued. "You, George, the son of my dearly loved brother, have been almost as my own son ——"

"And you, sir," I interrupted with emotion, "have been ever as a kind and tender father to me. But for you I should have been an outcast upon the world. I can as little repay your goodness as I can ever forget it."

"You have never ceased to repay me," returned my uncle, almost severely, for he rarely allowed his feelings to be seen. "But I was about to observe, George, although I regard you almost as my son, I must not forget that John is so in reality. Justice is justice, and he will inherit the bulk of my fortune. To you I intend to leave £10,000, and no more. This will place you above actual dependence upon your profession, and yet not make you indifferent to it. You will still have to work and make your way. Could I live to see it, I know what that will be. But," he added, alluding to himself for the first and last time in his life, "I feel that I have not many years before me. Even now it behoves me to be setting my house in order; to be squaring up my accounts for the Great Day of Reckoning. It comes to us all in turn."

The £10,000 seemed to me, who had never had any tangible sum of my own, though my uncle had kept me liberally supplied both at school and college, a fortune in prospective. At any rate, it would, as he observed, be a small independence.

I was called to the bar. As my aunt had died almost at my entrance upon school life, so my uncle died when I commenced my public career. It was my first great grief. I had been too young to realize the loss of my parents. My uncle had been, in every sense of the word, a father to me.

But now a strange circumstance arose. My uncle's will had been made six months before his death. In it, as he had promised, he left me £10,000. But whether his mind had become less clear through illness, or whether the legal difficulty arose through the stupidity of the lawyers who drew up the document, it was so worded that the executor, my cousin John Wellesley, could avoid paying it if he chose. The wish of the testator was perfectly clear. In every sense the executor was morally, though not legally, bound to carry it out. John availed himself of the flaw. He declared that he would not pay the legacy. He had himself come into a fortune of five hundred thousand pounds, besides the magnificent estate of Wellesley Hall, in Suffolk, with its nine thousand acres, which my uncle had purchased. Yet the demon of avarice so possessed him that he found himself unable to part with a fraction of the wealth he had inherited. He threw conscience to the winds,

By a peculiar logic of his own he persuaded himself that he was doing right.

He offered me a compromise. He would make me a present of *one* thousand pounds, to keep me going, as he termed it, until the briefs came in. This I indignantly rejected. I would not take a tenth portion as a present of that which was mine by right. It was a blow, undoubtedly. At the outset of my career the money would have been of the utmost use to me. But I resolved to live it down. I left the house in Portman Square, took up my quarters at my chambers in the Temple, resolved to work hard, and to succeed.

Though I left my cousin's house I did not break with him. He was having his day. He had revenged himself upon me for having become an interloper in his house. All the world was before him to choose as he would. Yet I felt that my day would also come. And somehow I never envied him his wealth, his position, or the smiles of the world. Nay, I would not have changed places with him.

One December John and I were invited to spend Christmas with the Earl of Norwich. The Earl was now an old man of eighty. Three of his daughters had married, three had grown into old maids: pleasant, genial women, nevertheless, with traces of faded beauty and disappointed hope in their faces. John, no doubt, had been invited on the chance of his falling in love with one or other of the two granddaughters then staying in the house. He was one of the best matches in the kingdom. I, simply because it would have been too pointed to leave me out.

We accepted the invitation. My briefs as yet were conspicuous by their absence. I had found no royal road to success. I must bide my time. It was hard lines, sometimes, after the life of luxury I had been used to. I now spent on my dinners what once I had spent on my gloves. But the world knew nothing about that; and I would sooner have turned clerk to an attorney than have borrowed of my cousin.

We went down together into Norfolk. Erlsmere, my grandfather's place, was ten miles from the station. A carriage awaited us with powdered coachmen and footmen, and all the outward symbols of pomp and pride. Had I been alone, although the Earl's grandson, I should probably have found a dog-cart in waiting, and been equally grateful. Love of splendour was never one of my besetting sins. All this was intended for the master of Wellesley, and the possessor of half a million.

The glorious day was now drawing to a close. The sun was sinking westward. The air was bright with frost. Snow had fallen, and the branches of the trees were white with crystals that glittered in the sunlight. All nature, far as the eye could reach, was clothed in the same cold hue. The sky was now clear, save for a few white clouds that floated here and there. As the sun dipped, it flooded

the whole landscape with a rosy light inexpressibly lovely and charming. The splendid horses stepped briskly over the hard road, exhilaration in the very sound of their sharp, echoing hoofs. The sparkling crystals on the hedges and trees recalled to my mind John's mania. It was singular that he never wore ornaments of any sort beyond a signet ring, and a locket to his watch chain containing his mother's miniature.

"Do you still keep up your love for diamonds?" I asked, on the impulse of the moment.

"More than ever," was the brief answer.

"And still collect them?"

"More then ever," he repeated. "I am now able to go in for my mania, if you choose to call it so. I have the largest unset private collection probably in the world."

"Then they must be worth something," I observed, "if they are all of the first water."

"Of the very first water," he replied. "I should never dream of collecting any other. They must be worth not less than a hundred thousand pounds."

I think I realized in that moment, as I had never yet done, the power of wealth and its extent. That a man, without moving a muscle of his face or changing a shade in the tone of his voice, could thus speak of so large a sum, or of such a collection.

"Folly!" I exclaimed, after a moment's pause given to amazement. "Madness and folly! You are not only sacrificing the interest of this immense sum, but also running the risk of losing the diamonds. What if they were stolen from you?"

For an instant a slight shudder passed through him. Then he smiled in self-confidence.

"I could as soon suppose the Mint robbed," he retorted quietly. "They are too well secured to be easily found."

"At your banker's, perhaps?"

"In my own house. Be easy, George. They are safe. I will tell you where ——"

"Not for worlds," I interrupted. "I will not be the repository of such a secret. If they were lost you might suspect me of having stolen them."

"Scarcely," he replied, laughing. "We bear a name to shame unknown."

Perhaps I thought differently.

II.

A LARGE party was assembled at Erlsmere for Christmas. Amongst them were my two cousins, already alluded to. In a sufficiently lady-like way, they both set their caps furiously at John Wellesley. They were very pretty girls, but fast, much given to flirting, and

following the hounds, and similar amusements. To me they were politely indifferent, as to a poor relation who must yet be countenanced for the family honour. They must marry rich men, these girls. Love and poverty were unknown quantities to them, no more to be reconciled than the poles. Spread their nets, however, with all the cunning they possessed, they succeeded never in landing their prize.

Among the guests were a Mrs. and Miss Hayward. The mother was a widow with a jointure of £1,200 a year, and, as she termed it, consequent poverty. She was an ambitious woman, and her hopes were centred upon her only daughter. Ellen Hayward was to repay all her mother's care and solicitude by a great marriage. She had had one offer already from the Lord Exmouth—a good-natured, foolish young fellow, who had not two ideas in his head—and had refused him. Mrs. Hayward had well-nigh died of grief, and her disappointment and rage had really affected her health.

How shall I describe Ellen Hayward? Perhaps in no better way than by saying she was the exact opposite to her mother. From the first moment I saw her my heart went out to her. If ever I married, I felt that that girl, and she alone of all the world, must be my wife. And yet what right had I, a penniless, briefless barrister, to be thinking of wife, and marriage, and things that are only given to the rich? Love, however, is stronger than reason; passion waits not upon sense. Ere many days had elapsed I felt such love for Ellen Hayward as I thought in my strength and new emotion few men had ever experienced. But I was proportionately wretched and miserable. Love waits not upon reason, but honour must. What right had I to declare my passion for this girl? To ask her to wait, it might be for years, whilst briefs came in and fame and wealth were mine? I could not do it. Moreover, I felt, even if I succeeded in gaining the daughter's affection—a prize too great, it seemed, to be possible—I should stand no chance with the mother.

There was something about Ellen Hayward that strangely recalled my dim recollections of my mother. She was pale and gentle, and moved and spoke with that quiet step and voice that, for me, has ever been one of woman's greatest charms. She was sensitive to a degree; every passing emotion was shadowed upon her face. Lovely always, the flush of pleasure would render her almost dazzlingly beautiful. She was peculiarly animated also, at times; and, when she could overcome a certain innate shyness of temperament, surprised one with the brilliancy of her cultivated mind. Her chief accomplishment was music. Nature had endowed her with a voice, not particularly strong but of inexpressible sweetness, and it had been well cultivated. Music has ever been a passion with me; but no voice, no playing had ever touched me and thrilled me as that of

Ellen Hayward. Her eyes were of an intense violet blue, her hair was of a rich, pale brown; and she was somewhat above the middle height of women.

As the days went on it became apparent to everybody that Ellen Hayward had made a conquest of John Wellesley. I, with the instinct of jealousy, had seen it from the first. I watched him struggle against a passion that, if gratified, would compel him to change the whole tenor of his life. I saw that he finally yielded and gave himself up to the inevitable. Ellen Hayward should be the future mistress of Wellesley Hall.

What a destiny for a man! How proud he might be of his wife! How he might glory in throwing himself at her feet; his wealth, his heart, his whole love and being. And she—how she would do the honours of his house; how grandly all this wealth would become her, and sit upon her. And yet I could see that, with it all, his love was a selfish love. He still loved himself best, and thought of himself first. Of any higher love he was incapable.

What wonder that I was miserable? What chance had I against John Wellesley, with his broad acres, his town-house, his great income—for the Wellesley estate had been so managed that its revenues were considerable. Mrs. Hayward quickly saw how things were turning. She flattered my cousin, fawned upon him, and singled him out on every possible occasion. If anything could have cooled John's ardour, it would have been this woman's miserable folly and want of tact. But, too far gone, he contented himself with disliking her heartily.

The climax came. More and more, hour by hour, my deep and passionate love had grown for Ellen Hayward. That she read the truth in my eyes I never doubted. I could not control them as I could control my speech. I never uttered one word of love. Yet she did not seem to encourage John Wellesley. Day by day she was more silent; her spirits became unequal; her quick, quiet step was quiet still, but slow. I never saw her change countenance whenever John approached her. She would glance over at her lynx-eyed mother, who no doubt gave her many a curtain lecture, and constrain herself to reply to him when he spoke. She never manifested the slighest pleasure in his society. Yet I knew that she would be compelled to marry him. So a fortnight passed away.

One morning some of our party had gone out for a walk, others were in the billiard room; my two cousins and two young men were alternately flirting in the music room and playing a quartette on organ, piano, violin and violoncello, making a furious noise but not very much music. A spirit of restlessness was upon me, as it ever was when Ellen Hayward was absent. She had gone out with the others; John was of the party. They were probably together, and that was enough for me. I felt that I could not bear this life much longer. I was growing dazed and giddy with misery. I would leave

it all—hope, happiness—behind me; go back, and drown my sorrow in hard work.

I strolled alone into the small blue drawing-room, and shut myself in. I had taken a volume of Byron with me, and opening the book by chance, was musing over those lines that in their sad undertone seemed to find their key-note in my present mood. The reader probably knows them by heart, as I did.

"There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,
When the glow of early thought declines in feeling's dull decay;
'Tis not on youth's smooth cheek the blush alone which fades so fast,
But the tender bloom of heart is gone, ere youth itself be past.

* * * *

Though wit may flash from fluent lips, and mirth distract the breast,
Through midnight hours that yield no more their former hope of rest;
'Tis but as ivy-leaves around the ruin'd turret wreath,
All green and wildly fresh without, but worn and gray beneath."

I had thrown myself into a lounge in the deep bay-window, behind the curtains drawn across the archway, and was quite concealed. The room led into a conservatory, of which the inner door was open. I had glanced in upon the delicate ferns and beautiful hot-house flowers, thinking, with all a lover's rhapsody, that my love was purer than the opening rose, more queenly than the regal camellia. Suddenly, with my eyes bent upon the last verse of the lines, I heard the outer door of the conservatory open—and close. Two persons entered the room: my cousin John and Ellen Hayward. He was talking rapidly.

"Ellen—Miss Hayward," he cried, in a voice in which there was much astonishment and a little pain: "you do not mean what you say. This cannot be your final answer. I will not take it."

"Indeed, indeed you must," she murmured in a voice agitated and broken by conflicting emotions. "I am sensible of the honour you would do me, Mr. Wellesley, but I can never be your wife. I hoped my manner to you would have spared us both this pain."

"Think what you are refusing," he returned. "A lot that almost any girl would envy; a position few occupy. Everything that wealth can command shall be yours."

"Wealth and position can never bring happiness to me," replied Ellen. "I have been taught to dread, almost to despise poverty; but there is a fate I dread more than that."

There was a moment's silence. What could I do? I was hidden behind the curtains, a most unwilling witness to the interview. It was a trying moment. I felt half guilty of treason, yet unable to help myself. It was impossible to come out upon them. I dreaded lest they should discover me. The whole thing had happened so suddenly that I had not time for thought or action. Had the window beside me been open, how gladly I would have escaped into

the grounds. But it was closed and fastened. John spoke again.

"Can you give me no hope?" he asked, almost bitterly. In my heart I almost felt for him. "No hope—even for the future?"

"None," she replied. "None, Mr. Wellesley, now or ever. I can never marry you." I could hear that she was crying silently.

"You speak confidently, Miss Hayward." Then after a moment's pause he resumed: "You could not speak thus certainly without a cause. Tell me this, at least, in mercy. Do you love any one else?"

I felt, for I could not see, that her hands went up to her face. I pictured the crimson tide that the words must have called up. I heard a half-broken murmur: "You have no right to ask me that." And my heart sank within me.

"I am answered," he said, most bitterly. "Truly, I see that there is no hope for me. Tell me, Miss Hayward, oh! tell me that my rival is not my cousin George. Anything sooner than that. By heavens! I would ——"

"Oh, no! no!" she interrupted. "Never! never! I will never tell you that! How can you, how dare you ask me? Do you not see, Mr. Wellesley, that you are humiliating me? Leave the room, I beseech you. Leave me to myself."

She must have pointed imploringly to the door. He could only obey. One moment's hesitation, a half uttered word, a step towards her, and the door closed behind him. She was alone—yet not alone.

At the mention of my name I had well-nigh betrayed myself. I could almost have come out and spurned him for his unmanly, ill-considered question. And yet, with it all, I pitied him. Was I not myself suffering the same exquisite pain—a thousandfold intensified, according to our natures?

The door closed behind John Wellesley. Ellen Hayward's self-control gave way. She sank to the floor, with her head upon a low easy chair, and broke into passionate sobs. And then, I could not tell how or why, there was a sound in those sobs that for the first time awoke hope in my heart. What could I do? How declare myself to her?

Moments, that seemed an age, passed by. Quietly I came out of my place and went up to her. She must have thought I had then entered the room. Neither then nor ever after was she undeceived. I spoke but one word, too agitated to say more.

"Ellen."

The sobs ceased. For a moment she looked up: then, with a half scream, hid her face again in the chair.

"Ellen."

It was unnecessary to add anything. That one word told her all. Slowly she rose and turned to me, trembling as a delicate fern, her lovely face all tears and blushes, like a rose in the early morning.

In a moment she was clasped within my arms, her face concealed on my shoulder.

I shall never forget that first moment. When I felt she was mine; mine in poverty; mine, chosen before all the wealth and rank that might have been hers. And I there registered a vow that my first duty in life should be to make her happiness: to place her first in every thought of my heart.

Then came the reaction. What had I done? What would Mrs. Hayward say? Her consent would never be gained. Nor could this be a matter of wonder. Who or what was I, compared with those who had sought the hand of Ellen Hayward?

"Ellen," I cried, clasping her yet closer to me; "you will be lost to me in spite of all. We shall never gain your mother's sanction. How, indeed, can I in honour ask her for you in my present position? My love, my love! to what terrible trouble have I brought you?"

"I do indeed dread my mother," murmured Ellen. "I cannot marry without her consent. But, George"—she whispered my name shyly—"on the other hand, she cannot force me to marry against my will. If I owe her a duty, I owe one to myself also. I will wait for you, even if it be until we are both old."

We were disturbed by the laughter of many voices. They were returning from their walk. Ellen escaped to her room. I heard an enquiry for Miss Hayward and Mr. Wellesley. They had lost them in the Fellowes wood, just beyond the shrubbery.

I had but one thing to do now. It had better be done quickly. That afternoon I sought a private interview with Mrs. Hayward, and told her the truth. I need not repeat what passed. A more bitterly indignant, angry woman I never saw. Never should her daughter become my wife. She had other views for her. I had played her a cruel, a dishonourable turn, in clandestinely, as she phrased it, stealing her daughter's affections. She would sooner follow her to her grave than see her my wife. And more to the same effect.

"To-morrow morning," she concluded, "I and my daughter will leave Erlsmere. You shall see her no more."

"Save yourself that trouble, madam," I retorted, for my anger, too, was roused, though under control. "I have just been with my cousin. He leaves Erlsmere to-morrow, and I go with him."

"Leave! Mr. Wellesley leave Erlsmere!" cried Mrs. Hayward in startled accents. "What is the meaning of this?"

"I have not asked him. Perhaps your daughter could give you a reason." For the life of me I could not have avoided that small stroke of malice. And Mrs. Hayward turned livid with rage and terror. She had made so sure of her game.

"George Wellesley," she cried, in a tone of suppressed passion: "if you have done this thing, if you have supplanted your cousin

in my daughter's affections, I will never forgive you to my dying day. Now leave me. Leave me. I hope I shall never see you again."

A hope destined to be fulfilled: but not as she wished it.

Ellen did not appear again that day. I contrived to have one short interview with her, in which she promised to be brave for my sake. I bid her farewell; and, feeling it might be long ere we met again, I left my kisses upon her lips, as pledges to be redeemed in the time to come.

The next morning I left Erlsmere with my cousin. He was morose and moody, and only answered my remarks in monosyllables. He knew nothing of what had passed between Ellen and me: he said nothing, but I fancied he guessed something of the truth. I saw that he was not very deeply wounded. His heart would soon go back to its normal condition.

III.

We reached London. My cousin went to Portman Square, I to my chambers. There I found an unexpected surprise. A brief awaited me in an important case. If I succeeded in carrying it through, it might well prove a stepping-stone to work and success. I laid my head upon the pillow that night, and felt that I would not exchange lots with the happiest, most prosperous of men.

When at breakfast the next morning, my cousin, to my intense surprise, came in. Never before had he paid me so early a visit. One look at his face told me that something had happened.

"Have you played me this trick?" were the first words he uttered: and for the first time in my recollection his voice betrayed something like genuine emotion.

"My good fellow," I replied, "I am not in the habit of playing tricks—to you least of all. What's the matter?"

"The diamonds are gone

I stared at him in bewilderment. I recalled our conversation in the carriage as we drove to Erlsmere: my wonder as to what he would do if such a thing were to happen: his self-confident reply.

"You don't mean to say the diamonds are stolen!" I returned. "It was only the other day you told me of their safety. You said they were beyond the reach of burglars, or something to that effect."

"True. I remember. And I was hoping—a forlorn hope, I admit—that you had somehow caused them to be abstracted, in order to make good your words, or to read me a lesson."

"A forlorn hope, truly," I answered, at once vexed and amused. "I am glad you admit that. You must recollect that you did not even tell me where they were stowed away. I stopped you as you were about to reveal the secret."

"I do remember. Well, they are gone. They were all in one

parcel, wrapped up in cotton-wool, enclosed in wash-leather, and deposited in a small black leather case. When I got home last night, and had dined, I went to have a look at them. They were gone! I have never closed my eyes all night," he continued, feverishly twirling his hands. And indeed he looked almost haggard. This loss was affecting him far more than the loss of his lady-love.

"Who in the world can have taken them?"

"Who indeed!" returned my cousin. "Evidently some one who had knowledge of the diamonds. You will naturally think of the servants. I am satisfied of their innocence. Not one of them knew even of their existence. I have had every one of them, man and woman, up before me. I told them I had lost a valuable parcel during my absence. The ignorance of each and all of them was too evident to be mistaken. The butler's manner was certainly peculiar, but he is altogether above suspicion."

"Brown is undoubtedly above suspicion," I replied. "Twenty years of faithful service to my uncle would prove that, independently of the man himself. But what are you going to do in the matter?"

"Do!" he cried, starting up excitedly, "do everything. I will not leave a stone unturned to recover my precious diamonds. I am now off to Scotland Yard, and I mean to advertise largely in all the papers. If any earthly power will bring back the diamonds, I shall see them again. Woe betide the thief if I catch him! He shall have no mercy."

I felt that to be true enough. Mercy was not very much in my cousin's line. "They will be hard to trace," I said. "Single stones, unset, may easily be disposed of from time to time. But you must hope for the best. It is a terrible loss." And I thought how rich I should have considered myself with half that sum.

The matter was put into the hands of the authorities at Scotland Yard. In a few days the following startling advertisement appeared in most of the daily papers:—

"£10,000 Reward. Whereas a large parcel of diamonds has lately been stolen from No. 100, Portman Square. The sum of £10,000 will be paid for their recovery. A proportionate reward for their partial recovery. The further sum of £1,000 will be paid for the identification and arrest of the thief or thieves. Apply to Chief Inspector Sims, Scotland Yard."

I read and re-read the advertisement. The reward was a large one. My cousin's love for his precious stones must have been great indeed, apart from their intrinsic value. His feeling of revenge against the offender must have been almost as powerful, to have induced him to add the further sum for the apprehension.

Three weeks passed away. The robbery had become the talk of the town. Day after day the advertisement appeared. Whosoever

the thief might be, he must surely be trembling in his shoes. The whole machinery of Scotland Yard was set in motion: as yet without result. The mystery remained shrouded in gloom. The perpetrator of the robbery was still at large, and the diamonds were still missing.

During this period I was working hard at my case, getting up every possible evidence, determined to achieve a brilliant victory. It was a case full of subtle and minute points; of intricacies that had to be unravelled at the cost of much patience: a case that would fall through without the most careful and sustained attention, and it involved a momentous issue. Fortunately, I felt that I had right and justice to sustain my efforts.

It happened that I had occasion just at this time to go down into Gloucestershire, upon a little private business of my own. I could not well spare two whole days to the task, and therefore decided to travel down by the night train. I reached Paddington with about five minutes to spare, took my ticket, chose my compartment, and laid down a small black bag upon the seat. Then I found that I had forgotten to take an insurance ticket, according to my usual custom, and I left the carriage to remedy the omission, returning almost at once. I halted a moment at the door of my compartment, and looked round. As I did so I caught sight of an individual occupying the very seat I had just quitted. My black bag was nowhere visible. I was about to speak to the man, when something caused me to hesitate. There was a peculiar look about him which I did not quite like or understand: a strange restlessness in the eye, as he stared full at me, a wild, almost *hunted* expression in the face. Almost fancying him a maniac, I shrank from addressing him. I went up to the guard.

"There is a man in my carriage," I said, "whose appearance I do not altogether like. I cannot make him out. I even doubt his right to be in a first-class compartment. Moreover, a black bag that I left for a moment on the seat has disappeared. Will you oblige me by asking to look at his ticket."

"Certainly, sir," replied the guard, touching his cap. "If the man has made any little mistake," he added with a smile, "we will let him know it."

We went up together to the carriage. It was now empty, and the bag was where I had left it! The guard looked at me, I at the bag. I felt mystified and bewildered.

"You have evidently mistaken the compartment, sir," said the guard. "An easy thing to do unless you notice the number; they are all alike. I think you had better get in now; we are on the point of starting. Do you wish to be alone, sir?"

"Yes," I answered. I had much to think of, and one or two papers to look over. Solitude would assist me. The guard closed and locked the door. In a few moments the train moved off. I

threw myself back in the corner of the carriage, closed my eyes, and gave myself up to reflection. The late incident had perplexed and somewhat annoyed me. I gradually came to the conclusion that the guard was right; I had mistaken the compartment.

It was a fast train. Thinking over the various points in my case, I gradually fell into a doze.

Something awoke me; I could scarcely tell what or how. A groan, a movement, an unseen presence. At first I thought it was inside the compartment, but this was impossible; I was alone. Then I concluded it must be the guard passing the window. I jumped up and looked out, but could see no one; he must have gone back to his van. I threw myself back in my corner, and was soon dozing once more.

Again I was awakened by a precisely similar noise. Yet still I could not describe what it was. I looked out again, but no guard was visible. We were rushing through the night air. The stars were shining with all the brilliancy of a frosty night. The moon had just risen. The surrounding country looked cold, dark, and gloomy. Here and there a light shone out from some cottage window or road-side lamp, rendering the blackness more intense. No sound was audible, save the mighty on-rushing of the train. With a half shiver I threw up the window, and went back to my corner. Contrary to my usual habit, I was strangely sleepy that evening. This I attributed to a hard day's work, combined with the change from the heavy atmosphere of London to the clear frosty air through which we were hurrying.

I can just remember hearing, as in a dream, the prolonged shriek of the whistle as the train entered the long tunnel just beyond Stroud. In my half sleep I had a faint knowledge of the hollow, rumbling, unearthly sound of the train as it surged through the black space. Then, suddenly, that mysterious sense took possession of me that most of us experience even in sleep when some one is gazing at us. Have you ever looked at a sleeping child, reader? I rarely do so but at once a sense of uneasiness seems to take possession of it: it stirs; its eyelids quiver; the chances are that it wakes up to consciousness. This sense came back to me as I slept. Gradually the sense of life and motion crept back to my brain. I opened my eyes—to look upon what?

A moment before I had been alone. Now, in the middle of this horrible tunnel I found a man seated opposite to me, staring at me with wide-open eyes that suggested madness, pale as a spectre. It was the man I had seen at the Paddington station.

I confess, and without much fear of being accused of cowardice, that for a moment my heart stood still. The time and the situation were sufficiently startling. In broad daylight it would have been an unpleasant surprise. In the dark night, in the middle of a gloomy mysterious tunnel, its effect was heightened a hundred-fold. But I

retained my presence of mind; and, even in that first moment, felt that I must be cautious. I was possibly in the power of this man, and any sign of fear might be fatal.

I did not move; but, opening my eyes to their utmost width, I stared back at this mysterious traveller, who came and went with such supernatural power. Then I gradually moved into a more upright position.

"Oh, sir, have mercy upon me! Do not betray me?"

Never shall I forget those few first imploring words, or the agony in the man's face and eyes as he spoke them, or the pleading look of his nervously clasped hands. At once I felt that I was safe at least from bodily violence.

"Who and what are you?" I asked quietly, looking as severely upon the man as I could.

"A miserable wretch," he replied, and I thought he would have burst into tears. "The most miserable wretch on earth. I throw myself on your honour and protection, sir."

"My honour and protection!" I cried indignantly. "As far as I can see it is not a case for honour and protection, but for a magistrate. I shall certainly deliver you up at the next station."

The fellow fairly broke down. He threw himself on his knees before me, and his utterance was broken by sobs.

"Mr. Wellesley," he cried—and I started to hear the man address me by name—"if ever you had mercy in your life, have mercy upon me now. As you hope yourself for mercy in the next world, be merciful to me in this."

I felt myself irresistibly influenced by the man's manner. I could not altogether pass over his appeal. There was a history behind all this. Here was no madman certainly; and as I looked more closely at the face I felt drawn towards it. I motioned to the young man to resume his seat.

"Now," I continued, when he had done so, "tell me who and what you are, and what you have done. Tell me the whole truth, and leave me to judge after that as to what I shall do with you. In the first place, how do you come to know my name?"

"Because I know you, sir," he replied; and he had now a calmer and quieter, though not less distressed, manner. "I know you well, though you do not know me. I have seen you occasionally in Portman Square when you have been there, and I have happened to visit my uncle, Brown, the butler. It is because I know you so well that the idea suddenly seized me to confess all to you and throw myself on your mercy and goodness."

"Let alone my mercy and goodness," I replied. "You have no right to make any appeal to it. Rather make a speedy end to your story. What is it you have done?"

"*Stolen your cousin's diamonds!*"

I started, and scarcely believed my ears. Could it be possible

that the culprit, so advertised, so sought for, and sought in vain, was before me? He continued his story. Having told the worst, he seemed to recover fluency of speech, and went on to the end with feverish rapidity.

"It was I, sir, who stole those diamonds. I am not naturally bad or dishonest. Until that night I had never done anything wrong; never stolen, never even told a lie. I gave way to the temptation; the first great sin of my life, the last if you will be merciful to me. How did I know about the diamonds? I happen to be a confidential clerk of Burt and Henry, the great diamond merchants. Many a time I have taken diamonds to Mr. Wellesley, sold them to him, and received his cheque. More than once I have seen his whole collection. I have watched him take the small black box from his safe and compare the stones with those I had just sold him."

"What folly," I thought, as the speaker paused a moment, with an inward groan at my cousin's imprudence.

"I had taken to Mr. Wellesley one morning two or three stones of more than ordinary value, and he brought out his whole collection to make a comparison. He bade me look into them and note their beauty. I was dazzled by the sight, and, I suppose, at the idea of so much being the property of one man. A demon at that instant took possession of me. I could have declared that a something tangible whispered to me that these might become mine. A vision rose up before me as to what I should be, what I could do. From that moment I became possessed as much, I verily believe, as the men that you read of in the New Testament. I was no longer my own master. I had lost my free will. I saw where the diamonds were kept. I noticed the key as Mr. Wellesley placed it on the table after locking up his treasure. I studied it during the whole time that he was writing out a cheque. I have a strangely accurate eye for form, and as soon as I left the room I made a drawing of the key. Even then I could hardly tell why I did it. It was as though my mind and my hand were guided by some mesmeric power, unseen but felt. Bit by bit the madness gained upon me of wishing to possess those diamonds. Day by day it grew stronger and less controllable. I became ill and feverish; I slept little, and my dreams were haunted by the flashes of those stones. Strange, unaccountable state in one who had handled and had the command of thousands of gems, and never felt the slightest wish to possess one."

"Strange indeed," I observed. "Do you mean to say that you have had control of the stores at Burt and Henry's, and yet never coveted any but those belonging to my cousin?"

"Never, sir, on my honour; as truly as that we are now in this carriage. By night, I say, I could not sleep. By day I grew restless and absorbed. My companions noted the change, and joked me

with being in love. I was indeed in love, feverishly, insanely in love ; but not as they supposed.

"One thought, one idea absorbed me: the possession of those gems. My brain had lost its balance. Sleep, rest, appetite, peace of mind—everything was gone. Then came the time when Mr. Wellesley went to Erlsmere. I had made a key as near to my model and recollection as possible. I went up to my uncle and asked him to let me spend a week with him. He readily consented, for I am a favourite of his. You know, sir, that though a servant, my uncle has almost gentle blood in his veins. He is well educated and intelligent, too. But he is only my uncle by marriage. That very first night, when the house was asleep, I crept out of my own room, slipped into Mr. Wellesley's, and tried my key."

"And it succeeded?" I interrupted, involuntarily.

"No, sir, not as yet. It wanted altering, but I could tell that it would succeed eventually. For several nights I did the same thing, until at last the door stood open. The diamonds were mine. This happened but two nights before Mr. Wellesley's return home.

"But now, though the diamonds were mine, so uncertain, so treacherous is human nature, I suddenly lost all peace of mind, all happiness. With the success of my scheme I seemed to realise for the first time the enormity of my crime. In short my mind had recovered its balance. My companions had noticed my altered appearance before: they did so more than ever now. I can safely say that not one moment's rest have I enjoyed since that one fatal night. Not from the fear of discovery, bad as that has been, but for the sin itself. I would have returned them secretly—I would indeed—but then came the fuss, the commotion, the town-talk, the advertisements, the knowledge that Scotland Yard had the matter in hand, and I feared to do it. To add to my misery, I was paralyzed with terror. Nightly dreams of a felon's fate, of working in chains, visited me. I would start up in the darkness, trembling with a wild fear, feeling the clutch of a detective upon my arm, the iron round my wrist. In short, I was on the road to madness or death.

"I could bear it no longer. I asked for a holiday. It was granted at once. My principals saw I was ill, and thought I needed rest: I was too good a clerk to them to be lightly esteemed. I left directly. My mind was made up. I would quit England and emigrate. When far enough away to be in safety, I would return the diamonds, and thus in some slight measure atone for my sin. This very night I was on my way to Hereford to bid my mother farewell."

"And the diamonds?" I asked, after a pause given to painful thought.

"Are here." He pulled out a packet from a capacious great coat pocket, and placed it in my hands. "Every one of them is there. Not one is touched, or lost, or stolen. As I took them, so I return them to you. And now, sir," he concluded, "do with me as you

will. Give me up to justice, if you think fit, and complete my ruin. It will scarcely make me more miserable than I am."

What would you have done, reader?

"There is one thing I cannot quite understand," I said, passing over the question for a moment. "I saw you in this compartment at Paddington: a few moments later you had disappeared."

"There was my mistake," he replied. "I saw you enter the station and recognized you. In a moment, almost like an inspiration, it flashed across me that I would confide in you. If you only knew how I have longed to confide in some one! I watched you enter the compartment, then leave it again. I had already taken a first-class ticket to Hereford, thinking I should be safer from observation in a first-class carriage than in any other. Now, I thought, was my opportunity: if I could only have you to myself for a time in the train. I got into the compartment, and without noticing your bag sat down upon it. Without reflection I pushed it behind me. The next moment you returned. I saw you look at me steadily, then go up to the guard. My guilty conscience made a coward of me. I told you, sir," passing his hand hurriedly across his brow, "that I have lately felt almost mad. I thought you were going to deliver me up to justice. Upon impulse, without judgment, I concealed myself under the seat. A man less slim and spare than I could not have done it. What little flesh I had upon my bones has been worried off them."

He was indeed a pale, cadaverous looking object, yet with traces of refinement and good looks in his face. I searched for any indication of an evil or dishonest nature, and found none. Meeting him in the ordinary circumstances of life it was a face I should have trusted thoroughly.

"You have indeed acted imprudently," I said. "Had the guard looked under the seat, nothing could have saved you."

"True, sir. But I seemed to foresee what would happen. You would return to the compartment and conclude you had made a mistake. So it proved. I have been gathering up my courage ever since we started to come out and declare myself to you."

The precious packet was in my hands. I unwrapped the outer covering of brown paper, then the wash-leather, then opened the cotton-wool. The stones flashed and scintillated in the dim oil-light. My companion put his hands before his eyes. "I cannot look at them," he said; "the sight haunts me with horror." I soon covered them up again and put them into my bag.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Carew Marshman."

"Marshman—Carew Marshman!" I pondered aloud. "The name seems familiar to me. Was your father a clergyman?"

"He was, sir."

"I wonder whether it is the same Carew Marshman who was once curate to my father?"

"The very same," answered Marshman. "I have heard my mother talk of the Rev. George and Lady Anne Wellesley many a time: have heard her refer to those days as the happiest of her life. I was born at Combe-Carden when you, sir, were about two years old."

How strange the whole thing seemed. How constantly we are being reminded that the world is narrower than we think it. This additional fact made me more pained and grieved than before for the unhappy young man's position.

"But the Marshmans were well connected," I said. "How comes it that I find you in the position of a mere clerk, and with an uncle a butler?"

"It is only the old story," he returned. "My father died when I was fifteen, and I had to turn out into the world. I told you Brown was only my uncle by marriage. Years ago, my mother's sister ran away with him, not knowing his position in life; indeed, at that time it was far better than it is now. She has long been dead —I never knew her."

"Your mother is living, you say?"

"Yes, sir. She has a small income of her own, just enough to keep her. She lives on the outskirts of Hereford."

"Has she many children?"

"I am her only child. I have been the one hope of her life since my father died. I could never tell you what she has been to me, the sacrifices she has made. And in this manner I have repaid her."

The poor fellow broke down again and burst into tears, burying his face in his hands. As for myself, I found it necessary to look out for a few minutes into the dark night, where I saw two moons shining, and many stars that would have puzzled an astronomer. But time was passing. We should soon reach Gloucester, and I must decide on the course to pursue.

"I suppose, Mr. Wellesley, you mean to give me up to justice?" said Marshman in a despairing tone, when he had calmed down again.

"I cannot tell," I replied. "For the present you must leave yourself in my hands and consider yourself my prisoner. You will accompany me to my hotel in Gloucester, where you can pass as my clerk. I shall then have time to reflect in what line my duty lies."

Soon after this the train stopped outside Gloucester station for examination of tickets. The guard looked in as he passed, and great was his surprise at seeing a second person in the compartment he had so carefully locked against intruders. I slipped a piece of gold into his hand, hinted that it was all right and he need take no notice. He touched his cap and passed on.

I lay awake the greater part of that night. Not only had I an immense treasure in my possession, but the culprit also who had

stolen it. Ought I to give him up to justice? If I did not, should I, as the phrase runs, be compounding a felony? On the other hand, was I not justified, under the circumstances, in giving him another chance in life, during which he might regain hope and respectability? Once more, I ask, reader, what would you have done under the circumstances?

The next morning decided my course of action. I would give Marshman a chance to retrieve his error. I felt that I was showing mercy, and was justified in doing so. A day might come when perhaps at a Higher Tribunal I should myself stand in greater need of mercy than this poor fellow stood now.

I held a long and earnest conversation with Marshman, and was as kind and considerate with him as the circumstances would permit. His gratitude was painful to witness. Overcome the night before in making his confession, he was doubly so now in expressing his repentance. He listened to all I said, and acquiesced in all. I stipulated that he should give up the idea of going to Australia, and that he should return to his work after he had paid a month's visit to his mother to recover his nervous power. No one should ever know anything of the past deed; it should be buried in oblivion. I would return the diamonds to my cousin, and compel him to cease all further enquiries.

My business concluded in Gloucester I returned to London. The next morning I went down to Portman Square and found my cousin at home.

"Any news of the diamonds?" I asked.

"None whatever," he replied. "I almost begin to give up hope. I am so far gone that I should be thankful to get back the stones and let the thief go scot free. At first, I believe I was as anxious to punish the thief as to recover the diamonds."

I bent towards him. "John," I said, "give me your earnest attention for a moment. Suppose the diamonds were brought back to you on condition that you *should* let the thief go free, would you consent to it?"

"Yes," he answered, after a pause. "I would do so, unless they were brought to me by the thief himself. I don't think I could stand that. I might easily promise this," he added with a grim smile: "it is not likely to happen."

"You would give up all search of the culprit on receipt of the diamonds?" I continued. "Will you pass me your word of honour?"

"I pass you my word of honour. But why," he continued, irritably, "do you put such absurd questions to me? I tell you nothing of that sort can happen."

For answer I placed the packet of diamonds on the table. John started up almost as if he had been shot, his eyes glistening with excitement.

"My diamonds!" he almost shouted. "George, where—where did you find them?"

"That is my secret," I answered, deliberately. "You have the diamonds; be content. You will never know more of the mystery than this. You have given me your word of honour that you will cause all search, all advertisements, all fuss and annoyance to be dropped. Only on this condition have I returned them."

"You have my word, and it shall be done," he said. "But it is hard to resign all idea of punishing the criminal. It is hard not to know, even, by what mysterious chance you came into possession of the stones."

"Mysterious indeed," I answered. "And now, John, for my reward?"

"What reward?"

"The reward of £10,000, to be paid to whomsoever restored the diamonds, promised without condition, and to which I am entitled."

"But you don't mean to say you would condescend to take a reward?" he asked, his countenance lowering visibly.

"Not altogether as a reward," I answered. "More as my right and due. Have you forgotten my uncle's legacy? I have not. You refused to pay it to me once—you dare not refuse me now, John. It is retribution, but in a milder form than you deserve."

He saw that I was in earnest, and he gave in; with an ill grace, it is true, but for that I cared little. He brought out his cheque-book.

"I have a heavy balance at my bankers," he observed, "to meet an investment I was about to make. A portion of it must now go elsewhere I suppose."

So I left the house with my cheque, a richer man than I had entered it. In due time the important case I spoke of came on, I gained it, and was congratulated on all sides. My fortune was now assured. Briefs began to flow in; I was on the high road to distinction.

About eighteen months from the time I had become engaged to Ellen Hayward we were married. Her mother had died suddenly within six months of my last interview with her: and in this manner her wish that we might not meet again was fulfilled. I will pass over my happiness then and now; will only briefly allude to the patter of small feet about the house, the laughter of childish voices, the sunny influence of small golden heads. All this concerns not our story. I have risen in my profession beyond my hopes. I am even ambitious. Sometimes I laughingly tell my wife that the coronet she once rejected may yet be hers. Then her dark violet eyes look up into mine, more beautiful than ever, and still with their old sweet shyness, and I see that the pride and glory of the world, its pomp and vanity, are of small moment so that I am near her.

And Carew Marshman?

It fell out in the end as I desired. He returned to his work in London, a sadder and more subdued man, but penitent and honest. Henceforth I would have trusted him with untold gold. I did not lose sight of him. Occasionally, before I married, I had him up at night at my chambers, talked long and earnestly with him, and showed that I had both interest and confidence in him. And by degrees he regained his cheerfulness and self-respect.

Several years have passed since then. Carew Marshman has become a partner in the great diamond house of Burt and Henry. He is prosperous, married, and happy. His clerks idolize him, for he is strangely lenient to their small faults and failings. They do not know why; I do. The past is no longer referred to between us. It is blotted out. It will never be blotted out of his heart and memory. There it will remain and will bring forth good fruit to the end.

Reader, though you should blame me for showing mercy to him, I can never blame myself. I sometimes pause and tremble at the thought that I might possibly have acted otherwise.

AN ALLEGORY.

I put a precious seed into the breast
Of earth, a while ago;
And I rose early, ay, and late took rest
To see my flower-seed blow.

All through the rough winds of the bleak March day
I watched my garden plot;
Through showers of April, and through smiles of May,
And still it blossomed not.

I looked and waited while June roses blew,
And lark songs filled the air;
Not heeding that men whispered, "If she knew,
She would not linger there."

Under the molten heavens of hot July
Flew wingéd lightning spears;
Thunder flung back the portals of the sky,
And earth was drowned in tears.

Fearful and eager I the garden sought
When the fierce storm had passed:
My longed-for flower—a pansy of sad thought—
Had blown in tears at last.

G. B. STUART.

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The Argosy

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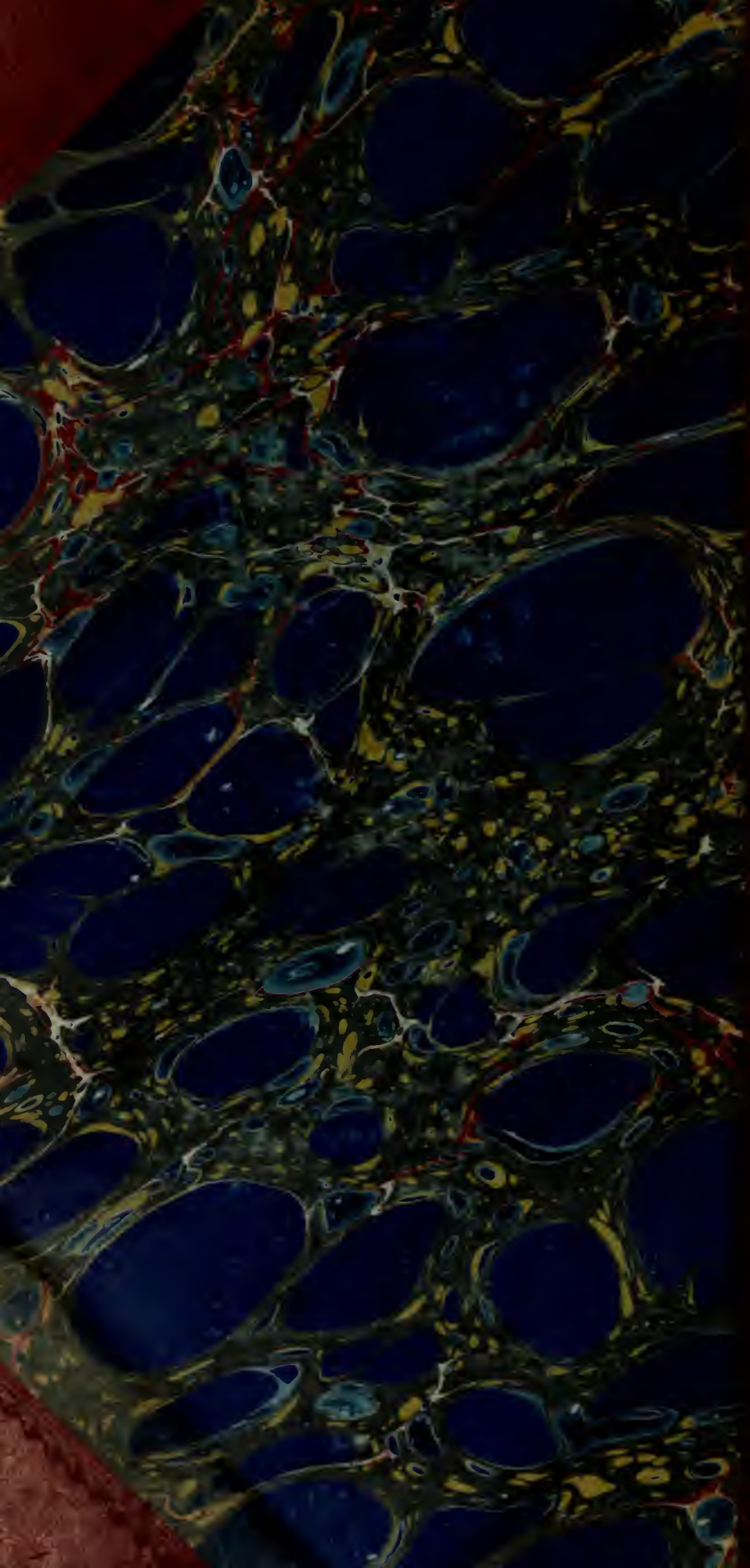
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